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Immigration agents to be deployed in US airports from Monday to ease long queues at security amid a weeks-long budget standoff over Trump's mass deportation drive, INSIDE JACKET

Cuban authorities scramble to restore power to the island after second nationwide blackout in less than a week, as the grid reels under aging infra & US oil blockade, INSIDE JACKET

Sri Lanka T20I captain and all-rounder **Dasun Shanaka set to join Rajasthan Royals for IPL 2026 as replacement for England all-rounder Sam Curran**, who is sidelined with a suspected groin injury, P 15

Pole vault icon Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis makes history at World Athletics Indoor Championships, becoming **first-ever man to secure 4 successive world indoor pole vault titles**, and setting a new **championship record of 6.25m**, P 15

Art of India opens in Mumbai

Union minister Nitin Gadkari with artist Paresh Maity, CEO of Standard Chartered India & South Asia PD Singh, and AOI curator Alka Pande at the inauguration of Art Of India 2026 in Mumbai | P 14

FIR against axed Punjab mantri for abetting suicide

Punjab police have filed a criminal case against dismissed cabinet minister Laljit Singh Bhullar, his father and his PA after suicide of Punjab State Warehousing Corporation district manager Gagandeep Singh Randhawa in Amritsar. The FIR was filed late Saturday. Randhawa allegedly left a video blaming Bhullar. P 9

Lamborghini stunt: Ricky Rai gets notice

A day after the pre-dawn stunt by a Lamborghini in city drew scrutiny, cops traced the high-end car to the residence of Ricky Rai, son of late underworld figure Muthappa Rai. Two notices have been served on Rai. P 5

Manipur govt-Kuki talks signal thaw

A tentative outreach between Manipur govt & Kuki-Zo Council members Sunday marked the first direct engagement in nearly three years. However, no decisions have emerged. P 10

Iran escalates on US threat: Will completely shut Hormuz

Will 'Obliterate' Power Plants If Strait Not Open In 48 Hrs: Trump

Iran and the United States traded threats over critical energy infrastructure in West Asia, as the war entered its fourth week, with Iran vowing Sunday to retaliate if President Donald Trump followed through on a warning that he could target Iranian power plants.

Barely 24 hours after he declared he was "winding down", Trump said late Saturday that the United States would "obliterate" the power plants — which millions of Iranians depend on — if Iran did not fully open the Strait of Hormuz within 48 hours.

Iran dismissed the ultimatum as it launched a new round of attacks on Israel and issued its own warning. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said in a statement that the strait will be completely shut should Trump execute his threat, "and it will not be reopened until our destroyed power plants are rebuilt". Earlier in the day, Iran had said "all except enemy ships" could pass through.

Iranian military spokesperson Ebrahim Zolfagharivowed Sunday that if Iranian energy sites were attacked, "all power plants, energy infrastructure, and information technology infrastructure" belonging to US will be targeted, and added that "power plants of countries in the region that host American bases will be legitimate targets".

Iranian missiles hit Dimona, a city 20km west of Israel's main nuclear facility, and the city of Arad (35km to its north) Saturday night. Authorities at Soroka Medical Center, southern Israel's main hospital, said they received at least 175 wounded. Israeli PM Netanyahu toured Arad and said it was a "miracle" no one was killed there. Israeli military said it's probing why air defences failed to intercept the missiles.

"If Israeli regime is unable to intercept missiles in heavily protected Dimona area, it is, operationally, a sign of entering a new battle phase," Iranian parliament speaker Mohd Bagher Qalibaf said on X.

Iran's state broadcaster said the strike on Dimona was intended to target the nuclear facility near the city, though UN officials said there was no evidence it had been damaged. The Tasnim news agency, affiliated with Iran's security forces, said the missile was fired in retaliation for an Israeli attack on an Iranian nuclear facility in Natanz on Saturday, as well as the Bushehr nuclear power plant last week.

Since the first US-Israel strikes on Iran on Feb 28, more than 2,000 people have been killed across the region, mostly in Iran. Still, Trump's objectives and his plans for next steps remained unclear.

FULL COVERAGE: FLAP OPP, INSIDE JACKET, 3

UK N-SUB MOVES INTO ARABIAN SEA

- Nuclear-powered UK submarine, equipped with Tomahawk missiles, has taken position in Arabian Sea, giving Britain the **capability to launch long-range strikes if conflict escalates**, Daily Mail reports
- **Japan** signals it can deploy its military for **minesweeping in the Strait of Hormuz** but only if a ceasefire is in place
- Israel's military says Iran has fired over **400 ballistic missiles** at Israel so far, and **92% were intercepted**
- Iran says it shot down 'enemy' **F-15** over southern coast. If true, at least half a dozen US jets have been struck so far
- Lebanon says Israeli strikes on its bridges and other infrastructure is a **'prelude to a ground invasion'**

Photo: Getty Images

A woman looks out of her destroyed apartment in Tehran

CCS meet takes note of 'significant impact'

Recognising the "significant impact" of the conflict in West Asia on the global economy and its effect on India, the CCS led by PM Modi on Sunday discussed steps to diversify the sources of import of chemicals, pharma, petrochemicals and other industrial sectors. The assessment was that there may not be a significant domestic impact in the immediate term, but there was a need to prepare for the medium and long term. FLAP OPP

Target of Iran missile hit called 'Little India'

Dimona, the town in southern Israel targeted by Iran, has a large Indian-Jewish population, mostly from Maharashtra, earning it the nickname "Little India". Indian shops are spread across the town, and Marathi can be heard everywhere, with a 7,500-strong Indian community making up 30% of the population. Cricket is popular, and the younger generation is familiar with snacks like papri chaat which several shops sell. PTI

Ships with US LPG & Russian crude arrive

Even as the West Asia war continued to escalate, two vessels — LPG tanker Pyxis Pioneer, carrying 16,714 tonnes of LPG from the US, and oil tanker Aqua Titan, carrying 96,099 tonnes of Russian crude — arrived at New Mangalore Port in Dakshina Kannada Sunday. Aqua Titan was originally headed for the Chinese port of Rizhao, but changed its course and headed to India. What made it change course was unclear. FLAP OPP

Will bomb India if US attacks Pak: Ex-envoy

In a provocative statement, Abdul Basit, former high commissioner of Pakistan to India, has said that striking Indian cities like New Delhi and Mumbai should be Islamabad's "default move" if the country comes under attack from the US. "We won't be able to hit back as America does not fall within our nuclear range. What do you think will be our option then? India," Basit told a local Pakistani channel. FLAP OPP

▶See INSIDE JACKET

Misuse of UAPA not a model for Viksit Bharat: Justice Bhuyan

'Judiciary Can't Be Eternal Critic Or Cheerleader'

New Delhi: SC judge Ujjal Bhuyan Sunday said the political executive's goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047 needs more room for debate and dissent without criminalising these, and erasure of "deep social fault lines" reflected in caste-based discrimination and atrocities on Dalits, **reports Dhananjay Mahapatra**.

Addressing the first national conference of SC Bar Association in Bengaluru, he said mindless arrests under anti-terrorism law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act with minuscule convictions "cannot be a model of Viksit Bharat". He said, "My model of Viksit Bharat is equal distribution of wealth and disappearance of acute disparity... which is also the goal set in directive principles of state policies in Constitution." He said in Viksit Bharat, "judiciary must remain judiciary... it can't be an eternal critic or a cheerleader."

> With **conviction rate of 5% or less**, and **acquittal** of over **95% of UAPA cases**, why should an accused be kept in jail without even filing a chargesheet against him... Many (UAPA) arrests were premature...
>
> **Debate should not be criminalised**. There should be more tolerance towards diverse views
>
> — Justice Ujjal Bhuyan

▶'Conviction rate 5%', P 9

HDFC resignation: MD backs independent probe

Days after the abrupt resignation by Atanu Chakraborty as non-executive chairman of HDFC Bank, Sashidhar Jagdishan, the MD and CEO of the country's second largest lender, on Sunday backed an independent investigation and said that the board will discuss the issue this week, **report Sidhartha & Mayur Shetty**.

"My view is that we should have one (probe), ideally with an independent person as well in the committee... I need to understand whether there are people who will be available or whether there can be a firm," he told **TOI** in an interview, and was open to recusing himself from it, if needed.

> We asked him (Chakraborty), 'If you do have any concerns, why don't you table the same?' ...He said there were no issues to share. The board very vociferously said, 'How can you have this statement inserted? You need to remove it.' But he remained steadfast
>
> — Sashidhar Jagdishan, HDFC MD & CEO

FULL INTERVIEW: P 13

Ulfa ultras strike Assam police camp, 4 injured

Ulfa-I militants attacked a police commando camp in Assam's Tinsukia district Sunday with at least five RPGs and automatic weapons, injuring four commandos and damaging weapons. The 45-minute gunfight ended as attackers escaped. Calling the strike "Operation Bujoni", Ulfa-I said it was retaliation for killings of many of its members by security forces in recent years. P 9

3 pilgrims among 6 dead in two B'luru accidents

Six persons, including three women from Tumakuru district who were set to go on a 15-day Varanasi tour, died in two road accidents on the outskirts of Bengaluru Saturday night. In Devanahalli, a truck struck a Tempo Traveller ferrying the women, while three men died when their mini goods vehicle crashed into a canter truck on Medahalli bridge on Old Madras Road. P 3

Domestic help's daughter wins shot-put gold

A domestic help's daughter from Meerut has won gold in shot put at National Para-Athletics Championship in Bhubaneswar, **reports Krishna Chaudhary**. Ria Solanki, 19, who was born without her left hand below the elbow, made it to the podium, thanks to the struggles of her mother Sakshi and driver-father, Anshuman, with whom she began training in in 2018. P 8

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CAN'T TAKE ROCK away from B'luru

The likely exit of Hard Rock Cafe comes at a time when rock music stands at a crossroads in Bengaluru, once regarded as the heavy metal capital of India. As the city's music economy shifts towards EDM and techno, rock music venues have become harder to sustain, both creatively and commercially. But industry insiders and enthusiasts say that even as venues come and go, rock's audience in Bengaluru isn't one to simply bite the dust

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The sudden news of Hard Rock Cafe shutting in India has left many disappointed and confused, wondering what kind of a blow it would be for the rock music culture, especially in Bengaluru, once the heavy metal capital of India.

"Hard Rock comes with a whole legacy — the history of rock and the merchandise of the greatest rock stars. That creates an ecosystem, and it's sad that we might have to lose that here," says Sanjeev Thomas, a musician and the founder of Rainbow Bridge School of Music. "A dedicated venue for a certain genre is rare and we need such venues for independent music to thrive."

While staff at the Hard Rock franchise on St Mark's Road have told the **TOI** that they are continuing the operations and their legal team is handling the termination of contract, locations for all cafes in India seem to have been pulled down from the official website of Hard Rock International.

ELVIS & THE TEMPLE OF ROCK

In 2023, Shashaank Abraham, 35, lead of the band 'Return to Sender', made his debut as an Elvis Presley tribute artiste at Hard Rock Cafe on St Mark's Road. Calling it a paradise for all music lovers, he says, the band has always had a great crowd at the cafe. "When you want a good quality band, especially for tribute shows, everyone thinks of Hard Rock. No other venue does tribute shows as well and consistently as Hard Rock."

The rock 'n' roll band has been performing there on Elvis' birth and death anniversaries. "There's a framed Elvis shirt with a missing button. He gave that shirt to someone to mend but never took it back; that has now come to the Hard Rock Cafe here. Just putting my hand on that case gives me some inspiration and courage. Then I look at the other artistes — the Beatles, an Eric Clapton's guitar, Led Zeppelin, Elton John, Michael Jackson," he says. "I think we'll be losing a huge chunk of music history if the Hard Rock Cafe in India ceases to exist."

'NEW AVENUES WILL EMERGE'

"Back in the day, Bengaluru was known almost exclusively for rock music. If you wanted to hear it, you had to go to MG Road or Brigade Road. Now, people in Indiranagar or Kammanahalli have their own local venues and don't feel the need to travel across town. This variety is a good thing," says Arpan Peter, 39, founder of the India Jazz Project.

Arpan began his career as a heavy metal promoter, bringing legendary acts such as Lamb of God, Children of Bodom, Opeth, Meshuggah and Gojira to India. He says while one iconic venue may be closing, Bengaluru is gaining a 22,000-square-foot Piano Man Jazz Club. "A majority of Hard Rock's programming in recent years was heavily cover-based. But if it shuts down, it won't cause a seismic shift in the music scene."

AS LIVE AS EVER: A band performs at Hard Rock Cafe on Thursday night

KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON

Bengaluru was once regarded as the heavy metal capital of India. "The city is also home to a deep-rooted classic rock culture, once kept alive by bars like Purple Haze and Styx, and continued by Pecos. We also saw a massive surge in nu-metal and alternative rock in the early 2000s... the fact that 45,000 people turned up for Linkin Park proves that the demand in this part of the country is still immense," says Abhijith A Bhat, founder of Zero Gravity Festival and who goes by the artiste name Psy Didge. He points out that local rock music is also thriving. "Gigs of Thaikkudam Bridge, Raghu Dixit Project, Avial, Agam or Pineapple Express sell out very fast."

Pecos Pub has been playing recorded classic rock music for over three decades. Liam Timms, director, Pecos Hotels and Pubs Limited, says rock music always existed in Bengaluru and to date, their playlist is entirely managed by the customers. "People write and give their requests on napkins or sheets of paper," he says. "Classic rock is evergreen and people of all generations appreciate it."

ROCK'S NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

Many artistes are aware of the reality that rock music is not mainstream anymore like it was in the 90s or early 2000s, and are shifting their choices.

Abhijith says everything has shifted to electronic music or techno now. "There are not many new rock bands that have come up after the '90s. I have been on both sides of the table. I was an active part of the rock music scene a decade ago and at present, I have electronic music projects."

Siddhartha Baja, founder of Freedom Jam, an over 30-year-old initiative that provides free platforms for musicians to perform live, says the response for rock commercially is less than what it was a couple of years ago. "Even when greats like Deep Purple had returned to the town, the turnout was lesser than earlier. Comparatively, younger bands like Linkin Park have done much better, but in absolute numbers the audience is a lot smaller than for a singer from the film industry."

Siddhartha says budget could possibly a big factor for shrinking venues for live or rock music — as most venues don't think of music as the main attraction and hence, don't spend much on the setup and artistes. Also, managing a band is tough compared to a solo artist. "A band will have at least 10 to 12 members. Managing a big group is always a challenge, and people are also not able to hold a band together for a long time. That is why they are shifting to an easier way of producing music — having a computer rather than a big band," says Abhijit.

Shashaank says the new generation is more interested in EDM. "Even the concept of a guitar solo has slowly disappeared in modern music," he rues. "But there are still die-hard fans who have an appreciation for rock. That will never go away. Hard Rock is always packed. The need to keep these rock shows and venues alive is more important than ever because the new generation needs to discover what rock music is all about."

ROCKERS & ROLLERS

Some venues for live/rock music recommended by musicians

- The Humming Tree
- The Raft
- Fandom at Gilly's Redefined
- Ram's Musique Experience
- Windmill Craftworks
- The Blue Room
- Courtyard Koota

B'LURU ROCK FANS HAVE PLENTY TO CHOOSE FROM

Bruce Lee Mani, guitar player, singer, song writer and founder of the rock band Thermal and a quarter (TAAQ), recalls when they started performing in 1996, they either played at a college festival or competitions or they didn't play at all. "There were no dedicated venues or regular festivals for rock music. Now, it is amazing that there are multiple music festivals, international bands visiting, and so many local venues. The audience has also evolved to accept emerging artistes doing experimental things; it is no longer just about cover bands."

There are numerous smaller and mid-sized venues like The Blue Room in Jayanagar (a 50-seater that does jazz and acoustic music) and Courtyard Koota in Kengeri hosting performances every week, Mani says.

He says the only real shift is that college gigs have taken a backseat. "Perhaps they've become more Bollywood-focused, but if you watch Instagram and local event calendars, there are gigs happening every week. Venues come and go; one disappears for a few years and then comes back stronger."

Rock fans in the city are certainly not starved for concerts. "The biggest buzz right now is Humming Tree because it has returned. Even the Koramangala Club had an acoustic performance recently, and in Feb, they brought back a vintage Bengaluru band called Human Bondage for a tour."

The Humming Tree came back into the live music scene in Feb this year. So far, it has hosted over 20 live gigs and Nikhil Barua, the founder, credits it to the immense support from the audience and musicians. "There has been conversations about the live music dying out but if people and govt come out in support to create an ecosystem for the art, it will do well," he says.

It shut after the govt had made it mandatory for the venues to have occupancy certificates to issue music licences. "That's why many music venues were shutting down. But we're now back, with all licences in place, and an upgrade of space that can accommodate about 600 people. We hold live music across genres like jazz, rock, metal and pop every Friday and Saturday. We also have a programme Grassroots where we present two to three really good bands every Wednesday. Customers can find their favourite music, while bands get good exposure," says Nikhil.

Shashaank Abraham as Elvis with members of the band 'Return to Sender'

"There should be an equal amount of new music coming out, and there should always be tribute shows as well. Remembering the legacy of the genre is important — **Abhijith A Bhat**

"The reality is that the majority of Hard Rock Cafe's programming in recent years was heavily cover-based... if it shuts down, it would be unfortunate, but won't cause a seismic shift in the music scene — **Arpan Peter**

"People who appreciate a specific genre of rock music will always find a dedicated venue that would cater to their interests in Bengaluru — **Liam Timms**

"Hard Rock comes with a whole legacy — the history of rock and the merchandise of the greatest rockers. That creates an ecosystem, and it's sad that we might have to lose that here — **Sanjeev Thomas**

Where the Road Meets the River: Pedalling 375km to Sigandur

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People fall in love with scenic places and engineering marvels all the time, and so did I. The Sigandur bridge — inaugurated in mid-July last year and went viral on social platforms — captivated me instantly. Soon, I decided that I'd cycle there to get a glimpse of the engineering marvel across the Sharavathi river. Now, that meant a 375km ride from Bengaluru! My winter plan almost fell through, but I managed it by early March.

The 2.5km Sigandur Bridge, officially known as the Sharavathi Backwaters Bridge, is a landmark infrastructure project in Karnataka's Shivamogga district. Spanning the vast backwaters of the Sharavathi river, the bridge connects Sagara in Shivamogga with Sigandur and further onward to Kollur in Udupi.

I set out at daybreak on March 5, planning to cover 250km on the first day and the remaining 125km the next. After being seen off on Tumakuru Road, it was just me on my bike, on the long Bengaluru–Honnavar highway.

The breakfast halt was at Tumakuru. As the day progressed, the sun turned unforgiving — especially around noon. Despite carrying a camelback (water-filled bag) and electrolyte, frequent refills became necessary. Beyond Gubbi, the entire BH Road revealed itself as an endless bypass stretch — no trees, no shade — just flyovers, concrete, and retaining walls. I cycled through playlists: from Rajkumar and SPB to Amitabh Bachchan, and pedalled through the heat, well-coated in sunscreen.

By the time I reached Tiptur, I was drained. A brief rest at a roadside farm helped, before I resumed after lunch at Arasikere. Kadur and Birur passed smoothly, but Tarikere slowed me down with roadwork and chaotic traffic, costing me precious 30 minutes. I wanted to minimise riding in the dark, but it was still 9.30pm when I finally reached my stop for the night at Bhadravathi.

PEDAL HAPPY: The 2.5km Sigandur Bridge is a landmark infrastructure project in Karnataka's Shivamogga district

IN A SNAPSHOT

- **BRIDGE LOCATION:** Across the Sharavathi river in Karnataka, connecting Sagara taluk, Shivamogga, to Sigandur village
- **INAUGURATION:** Opened to the public in July 2025
- **LENGTH:** Approximately 2.5 km; state's longest cable-stayed bridge
- **TERRAIN:** Built over the Linganamakki reservoir stretch of the Sharavathi river
- **CONNECTIVITY:** Improves access between Sagara, Hosanagara, Kollur (Udupi district) and coastal Karnataka routes
- **BEFORE THE BRIDGE:** Vehicles and passengers were ferried via barge/launch services, often causing delays during peak seasons

The next morning began early. Past Shivamogga, the road transformed — tree-lined stretches offered much-needed respite. Riding under a canopy of green, with light music and cheerful waves from schoolchildren, made for one of the most memorable parts of the journey. I slowed down, choosing to reach Sigandur by evening instead of afternoon, to take in the beauty of the countryside. To my luck, most of the Shivamogga-Sigandur route was downhill, the rest being a rolling terrain.

At the Heggodu stopover, I paid a brief visit to Neenasam, the renowned theatre institute.

After having lunch at a nearby hotel, I tried to take some rest in the cool comfort of an ATM, but its air-conditioning was not working. Soon, I found myself taking a short nap under the shades of coconut trees.

The final 30km stretch through Genasinakuni brought me to the Sigandur bridge by 5pm. Families milled about, clicking photos, but I was drawn to the sheer expanse of the 2.5km structure. Riding back and forth across it, with the mellow evening sun casting a golden hue, felt like a reward in itself.

Nearby, idle launches — once used to ferry devotees and vehicles across to the Sigandur Chowdeshwari Temple — stood as reminders of how the bridge has transformed connectivity.

After capturing a video of the ride, I continued to the temple, freshened up, and completed a quiet darshan.

As I exited, curious onlookers asked where I had come from. "Bengaluru," I replied — and that was enough to draw smiles, selfies, and a few words of appreciation for the 'pedal yatri'.

At Sagar, I negotiated with a private bus operator — who charged more for the bike than my ticket — for transport. After a brief exchange, we settled on equal footing. By the time I reached Peenya early the next morning, the sun was just rising.

The nomenclature of Bengaluru roads carries layers of memory and meaning. Here's one walkthrough

Finding B'luru on DVG Road

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Those who seek 'Old Bengaluru' are often faithfully directed to Malleswaram first, and then to Basavanagudi areas. With their food flavours, warmth and lived-in charm, these neighbourhoods never disappoint.

Tucked within Basavanagudi, just off the familiar bustle of Gandhi Bazaar, DVG Road quietly holds on to that old-world allure.

The road is named after Kannada writer, journalist and philosopher Devanahalli Venkataramanayya Gundappa, whose "Mankuthimmana Kagga" is called the Bhagavad Gita of Kannada.

STREET VIEW

The DVG Road extends from Nettakallappa Circle and North Road, cutting through Gandhi Bazaar main road. It is one of the localities to be bookmarked for authentic Bengaluru eats. A turn to the right after a few hundred metres would take you to Bugle Rock Park, which pays tribute to DVG with his statue, and boards displaying couplets from "Mankuthimmana Kagga".

Back on the road, the senses take over. A few steps from Nettakallappa Circle, the unmistakable aroma of crisp dosas and strong filter coffee drifts out of Upahara Darshini — one of Bengaluru's earliest self-service eateries. Its shavige bath has a loyal following, simple yet deeply satisfying.

Further down, the familiar name of Srinivasa Brahmins Bakery now wears a refreshed facade, but its beloved Congress kadlekayi remains unchanged in taste.

Nowadays, Bengalureans buy most of their greens online, but DVG Road offers a wider range of veggies with scores of pushcarts that line it.

The road joins the bustling Gandhi Bazaar circle, which is a burst of colours any time of the day, thanks to traders selling earthen lamps, bangles, other trinkets, and flowers. The place is also a dosa pit stop with the fabled Vidyarthi Bhavan, but there's a wait time. If running low on patience, one can head to Basavanagudi's own MTR, the Mahalakshmi Tiffin Rooms.

BEST OF OORU

MAYI GOWDA

As a bookseller and a lifelong reader, I have come across thousands of books. And a few authors have stayed with me. They not only tell stories but also shape the way we think about the world and ourselves. Here are five authors whose works I deeply admire, across both fiction and non-fiction genres

5 AUTHORS WHO SHAPED MY READING

George Orwell

Few writers have captured the dangers of power and control as sharply as George Orwell. His books Animal Farm and 1984 remain timeless. Animal Farm looks simple on the surface, but it is a powerful political allegory about how revolutions can go wrong. The story of animals taking over a farm gradually evolves into a cautionary tale about corruption and betrayal. 1984, on the other hand, is darker and more unsettling. It introduces readers to a world of constant surveillance, where freedom of thought is crushed. Even today, its ideas feel relevant in discussions about privacy and authority. Orwell's writing is clear, direct, and deeply thought-provoking. He doesn't just tell a story—he forces the reader to question systems of power. For any reader trying to understand society, Orwell is essential.

Georges Simenon

Georges Simenon is one of the most prolific and compelling writers of crime fiction. Best known for his Inspector Maigret series, Simenon focuses less on the crime and more on human psychology. His stories are quiet yet powerful, often exploring the inner lives of ordinary people. Unlike fast-paced thrillers, Simenon's novels move with a certain calmness, allowing readers to observe characters closely. What makes him special is his ability to create atmosphere. You can almost feel the streets, the cafés, and the moods of his settings. Simenon shows that crime fiction is not just about solving mysteries—it is about understanding people. His work is perfect for readers who enjoy subtle, character-driven storytelling.

Rex Stout

Rex Stout brings a completely different flavour to detective fiction through his famous characters Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin. His novels are witty, engaging, and full of sharp dialogue. Nero Wolfe, the brilliant but eccentric detective, rarely leaves his home, while Archie handles the legwork. This unique dynamic makes the stories both entertaining and distinctive. Stout's writing combines intelligence with humour, making his books easy to read yet deeply satisfying. For readers who enjoy classic mysteries with charm and personality, Rex Stout is a must-read.

James Clear

In non-fiction, Atomic Habits has had a massive impact on readers worldwide. The book focuses on the power of small, consistent changes. Instead of chasing big goals, James Clear explains how tiny habits, repeated daily, can lead to remarkable results over time. What makes this book effective is its simplicity and practicality. The ideas are easy to understand and even easier to apply. For young people, this book is especially important. It teaches discipline, consistency, and the importance of systems over motivation. In a fast-paced world, Atomic Habits offers a grounded approach to personal growth.

Eric Jorgenson

The Almanack of Naval Ravikant is a unique book that compiles the wisdom of entrepreneur Naval Ravikant. It covers topics like wealth, happiness, decision-making, and living a meaningful life. Unlike traditional self-help books, it feels more like a collection of insights and reflections. The book encourages readers to think independently and focus on long-term thinking. It highlights the importance of learning, building specific knowledge, and valuing time. For young readers, this book is almost like a guide to navigating life in the modern world. Together with Atomic Habits, it forms a strong foundation for anyone looking to improve both mindset and lifestyle.

(Mayi Gowda is the founder and proprietor of Blossom Book House)

War-led bitumen crunch hits rds

Pricier Material Stalls ₹1,500cr Works During Crucial Pre-Monsoon Period

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Photo for representation

> We usually don't stock raw materials; we procure them as required. Whatever stock we had is now exhausted. For about 10-15 days after the conflict began, we managed with available supplies, but that is no longer possible
> **— A contractor**

> As of now, asphalting works have not been stopped entirely. Preliminary works such as side drains and related activities are ongoing. We have held discussions with contractors and are evaluating the available options. If the situation stabilises, we expect supply and pricing to come back to normal
> **Maheshwar Rao** | GBA CHIEF COMMISSIONER

Bengaluru: Road asphalting works across the city have slowed significantly as the ongoing West Asia conflict begins to impact the availability and pricing of bitumen, raising concerns of delays in critical infrastructure projects ahead of monsoon.

Those linked with the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike Contractors' Association said they have largely halted asphalting activities over the past few days, citing both a shortage of raw material and a steep rise in costs. The issue threatens to delay road projects worth nearly Rs 1,500 crore that are currently in the pipeline at various stages, potentially impacting road conditions across multiple parts of the city.

According to the association, the price of bitumen has increased by nearly 20% in recent weeks. "Before the conflict escalated, we were procuring bitumen at around Rs 45,000 per tonne. Now, it has shot up to Rs 65,000 per tonne. At these rates, it is not feasible for us to continue work under previously approved tender amounts," a contractor said, highlighting the financial strain on contractors operating under fixed-price agreements.

Contractors have made it clear that they are unwilling to absorb the increased costs. They have instead suggested that the civic body procure and supply bitumen if it wants the work to proceed without delays. "We are ready to execute the projects if the material is provided. But we cannot take on the additional financial burden as tenders were approved based on older rates," another contractor said.

Most contractors said they source bitumen from Mangaluru, a key supply hub for the region. However, according to them, that supply itself has become uncertain, adding another layer of challenge.

The timing of the disruption has raised concerns, as the city recently saw an increase in road-work allocations after a relatively slow period. Many of these projects were expected to be completed before the onset of pre-monsoon showers, making the current slowdown particularly critical. With rains approaching, delays in asphalting could worsen road conditions across the city, leading to potholes, waterlogging, and traffic disruptions.

Officials acknowledged the situation but indicated that work has not come to a complete halt, with certain preliminary activities still underway.

Data being collected

Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) chief commissioner Maheshwar Rao said: "We are aware of the concerns raised by contractors regarding the increase in bitumen prices and are currently examining the issue in detail. Bitumen is only one component of road construction, so we need to assess the overall impact on project costs before making any decision.

Officials indicated that the civic body is in the process of gathering detailed data on current demand and cost escalation before arriving at a policy decision. GBA is now expected to evaluate whether project costs need revision or if alternative arrangements, including material procurement mechanisms, can be explored to ensure work continuity without burdening contractors.

Stir effect: Traffic curbs near Freedom Park for 3 days

Times News Network

Bengaluru: Motorists in the city are set to face traffic diversions and congestion around Freedom Park as large-scale protests are planned from Monday to Wednesday, with participants and vehicles likely to converge via Seshadri Road. Police have urged the public to plan their travel in advance and use alternative routes.

From Shanthala Junction and Khoday Circle towards Anand Rao Flyover /Seshadri Road /Freedom Park: Motorists are advised to take routes via Lulu Mall Road, KFM Road, Rajiv Gandhi Circle, Mantri Mall Road, Swastik Circle, Seshadripuram, Nehru Circle, Race Course Flyover, and Race Course Road.

From Mysore Bank side towards Basaveshwara Circle: Suggested diversion is through KG Road, Mysore Bank Junction, Sagar Junction, KG Junction, Tank Bund Road, KFM Road, Rajiv Gandhi Circle, Swastik Circle, Nehru Circle, and Race Course Flyover Road.

From Basaveshwara Circle towards Mysore Bank: Commuters can proceed via Basaveshwara Circle, Raj Bhavan Road, and Infantry Road.

From Kalidasa Road /Kanakadasa Junction towards park: Vehicles will be diverted right turn at Kanakadasa Junction towards Sagar Junction.

From Maurya / Subbanna Junction towards Freedom Park: Vehicles have to take right turn from Subbanna Junction towards Anand Rao Circle.

Duo murders man, 27, after tiff over money

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A 27-year-old man was brutally killed in the early hours of Sunday near Bhovi Colony in Kalkere, allegedly by two persons following an altercation over money.

The deceased has been identified as Kiran V, a resident of Bhovi Colony. Acting swiftly, Ramamurthynagar police tracked down and arrested the accused — Yuvaraj S, 28, an auto driver, and his friend Gangaraj S, 26, a store executive at an online grocery firm — within six hours of the crime. A senior police officer said the duo had gone on the run after the murder but was nabbed near Kolar based on a tip-off. According to preliminary investigation, Kiran, who was unemployed, had allegedly been harassing Yuvaraj and others for money to fund his drinking habits and personal needs. Despite repeated warnings from Yuvaraj to stop, Kiran allegedly continued to pressure him.

The incident unfolded between 4am and 4.30am when Kiran intercepted the auto in which Yuvaraj and Gangaraj were travelling near Bhovi Colony. He allegedly demanded money, and when Yuvaraj refused, Kiran is said to have threatened him, triggering an argument.

IN THE DOCK Yuvaraj S (top) & Gangaraj S

In a fit of rage, Yuvaraj allegedly picked up a jack rod from the auto and struck Kiran multiple times on the head. The victim collapsed on the road with severe injuries, while the accused fled the scene in panic. Locals later found Kiran lying dead and alerted the cops.

During interrogation, the duo allegedly confessed to the murder. Police said further questioning is on to verify the sequence of events and motive.

LPG vessels to dock in M'luru

Amid disruptions from the West Asia crisis, New Mangalore Port is set for steady arrivals of crude and LPG vessels. Russian tanker Aqua Titan, chartered by MRPL, discharged about 96,100 tonnes of crude Sunday.

More consignments are due: Oasis will bring nearly 99,900 tonnes of crude Monday, followed by Bourbon with 20,000 tonnes of ATF and Qiu Chi with 35,000 tonnes of motor spirit Tuesday. LPG supplies have also begun, with Pyxis Pioneer unloading about 16,700 tonnes for Aegis Logistics. TNN

6 killed, 12 injured in 2 late-night accidents on city's outskirts

Times News Network

TOI

The mangled remains of the van involved in Devanahalli accident

Bengaluru: Six people, including three women pilgrims, were killed in two road accidents on the city's outskirts late Saturday night. Eleven passengers and a van driver suffered injuries.

The three women lost their lives after their Tempo Traveller (TT) rear-ended a truck near Rani Circle flyover in Devanahalli around 11.50pm Saturday. A group of 14 members of the Stree Shakthi Sangha from Tiptur, Tumakuru district, had set out on a 15-day pilgrimage to Varanasi and other places, and was heading to KIA to catch a morning flight.

The van was driven by 21-year-old Raviteja from Tiptur. While descending a ramp, a Tamil Nadu-registered truck moving ahead suddenly veered right without warning, investigators said. Despite attempting to apply brake, Raviteja lost control and the van rammed into the truck's rear right side, leaving the vehicle completely mangled. Jayamma , 65, Yashodamma, 60, and Ganga (40) were all declared dead on arrival at hospital. Another passenger, Kempamma (60), is battling for her life. Raviteja and 11 others are undergoing treatment and are out of danger. The truck driver initially stopped but later allegedly fled, leaving the vehicle behind and without assisting the injured. He was detained Sunday afternoon.

In the other accident, which took place around 11.30pm, three men travelling in a mini goods vehicle died after crashing into a canter truck parked on the upper ramp of Medahalli bridge on Old Madras Road.

Driver Suresh , 32, Manikanta , 35, and Srinivas , 35, all residents of Whitefield and nearby areas, were transporting potatoes from Kolar to the city. The front portion of the goods vehicle was completely mangled. Police said the canter truck had broken down with a flat tyre, but its driver, Amjad Pasha, had parked it without switching on tail lights or placing reflectors or barricades — leaving it virtually invisible to oncoming traffic.

St Patrick's Day celebrated with focus on India-Ireland ties

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TOI

TOUCH OF GREEN: St Patrick's Day was marked Sunday by the participants wearing green and enjoying Irish food and music

Bengaluru: Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, honorary consul general of Ireland and chairperson of Biocon, and Kevin Kelly, ambassador of Ireland to India, hosted the 25th consecutive annual St Patrick's Day celebration here Sunday.

The occasion recalled the legacy of St Patrick, Ireland's patron saint, a fifth-century missionary known for spreading Christianity across the country after returning from captivity, and founding churches, schools, and monasteries. The event also highlighted the deepening partnership between India and Ireland across culture, education, innovation, technology, and trade. Mazumdar-Shaw said St Patrick's Day celebrations in Bengaluru serve as a joyful reminder amid global turmoil that we are all one, united in celebrating humanity. "St Patrick's Day is about bonhomie, merriment and enjoyment," she said.

She recalled that Biocon owes its origins to Ireland. "My Biocon journey was sparked by an Irish biotech entrepreneur," she said. "It is important for us to acknowledge the presence of Irish IT and startup companies in Bengaluru. Indian companies have also invested significantly in Ireland."

The Irish govt is now actively trying to create a deeper action plan for strengthening engagement with India. "Ireland is one of 27 EU countries, but we account for 10% of the total EU trade with India, nearly €16 billion, and there's so much more we can do. We are also looking at partnerships between universities and Supreme Courts in Dublin and in New Delhi. Moreover, we are strengthening our political links. There has been a real uptick in our relationships," Kelly said, adding the Irish Prime Minister plans to visit India in 2027, and Bengaluru, hopefully, will be there on his itinerary.

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Demand spikes as post offices turn one-stop financial service provider

Vindhya Pabolu & Sandeep Moudgal | TNN

Picture for representation

CHANGING STRIPES: In the past three years, the postal department has opened 45 new post offices in the state, mostly in North Karnataka

Bengaluru: With India Post increasingly positioning itself as a financial services provider rather than just a traditional mail delivery system, Karnataka is seeing a steady expansion of its postal network.

In the past three years, the department has opened 45 new post offices in the state, signaling a shift in focus toward banking and citizen services.

This growth comes despite a consolidation trend. Between 2013-14 and 2024-25, 126 post offices were merged, Union govt data shows. Yet, the total number of post offices has still risen—from 9,617 in 2022 to 9,662 in 2025, data tabled in the Lok Sabha shows.

Officials attribute the expansion largely to increased demand in North Karnataka — home to many of the new post offices. These operate under the core banking solutions (CBS) system, allowing customers to efficiently access banking services.

A key driver behind this transformation is the collaboration between India Post and India Post Payments Bank (IPPB), which has strengthened financial inclusion in rural and remote areas. Over the past five years, Karnataka citizens have opened 48.5 lakh IPPB accounts, enabling 23 crore direct benefit transfer transactions worth Rs 28,387.3 crore.

Giant reach

It shows a growing role of post offices in delivering govt subsidies, pensions, and welfare benefits directly to citizens — especially in remote areas where access to conventional banking remains limited.

The postal department is now aiming to expand its presence further by ensuring services reach even gram panchayat levels.

"There is a demand mostly in rural areas for services like Aadhaar and banking solutions," a postal department official said. "Our aim is to have a post office in every nook and corner of the state."

District-wise data shows Belagavi leads with 721 post offices, followed by Tumakuru (566). Smaller districts such as Chikkaballapur and Ramanagara have 199 and 183 post offices, respectively. In Bengaluru, the network is divided between 280 urban and 131 rural post offices.

Prakash K, chief postmaster general, Karnataka Circle, said: "We plan post offices depending on the size of the area. That's why Belagavi has the highest number because, geographically, it's a huge district, whereas Mangaluru and smaller districts have fewer offices due to their compact size. For every unit of area and population, we are mandated to open post offices, so our network ensures that every citizen, even in the remotest village, is covered. No private player can match this reach."

Insurance & Speed Post

Officials say besides banking and DBT, citizens increasingly visit post offices for services like insurance, Speed Post facilities and passport-related services. Their affordability, reliability, and familiarity have helped maintain public trust.

"Since the network ensures govt payments, financial services, and documents reach every corner of the state, people see this as a trusted option. India Post is a major centre in the country, providing 35 services and products and covers lakhs of people across the state," the postmaster said.

Playgrounds set to remain mandatory for colleges

PearlDSouza@timesofindia.com

Picture for representation

ALL PLAY: The Union govt's proposal allows relaxation of infrastructure norms such as playgrounds, but the state govt insists the rule is vital

Bengaluru: While debate grows over the Centre's proposal to ease provisions making it mandatory for educational institutions to have playgrounds as part of an ease of doing business (EoDB) push, higher education minister MC Sudhakar insisted the clause will stay.

Under the deregulation proposal, the state may be empowered to relax several requirements for private higher education institutions. These include minimum land requirements — whether purchased, rented or leased — needed to set up private universities or colleges.

EASE OF BIZ PUSH

The proposal allows relaxation of infrastructure norms such as playgrounds, laboratories, equipment, classroom sizes, built-up areas, computers, libraries and book requirements.

But Sudhakar told **TOI**: "National Assessment and Accreditation Council inspects sports facilities, and our educational institutes will stand to lose out if we remove the clause making playgrounds mandatory."

He said even the state govt mandates playgrounds. "For instance, when institutes approach the department for additional intake permissions, we mandate that 1.5 acres of land be set aside for sports. This has been a rule for at least seven years. Some institutes build new campuses, while others shift to larger spaces. But, without additional land for sports, requests for increased intake are refused."

Meanwhile, the urban development department is examining a proposal from the Centre, which identifies 23 priority areas and five optional areas for deregulation. Sources say one option being considered is rooftop playgrounds.

"However, unlike in China for example, our institutes are not spread out enough to have such facilities. These require about 3,000 to 4,000 sqft of contiguous space," Sudhakar said.

In addition, the central govt suggests the state may relax norms related to minimum security deposits or endowment funds required from private higher education institutions.

Another provision under consideration is to allow institutions to share facilities with govt or private entities. Under such arrangements, colleges could use common infrastructure including playgrounds, libraries and computer labs on a payment or cost-sharing basis.

Officials from the urban development department said the relaxation of such norms is being examined as part of the broader EoDB initiative.

However, any relaxation of standards relating to land and infrastructure would require consultation with relevant authorities, as these norms are currently governed by sectoral regulations and planning standards.

RSS is protecting murderers: MLC

Congress MLC BK Hariprasad Sunday said RSS and BJP should answer why RTI activist Vinayak Baliga was murdered.

"What crime did Baliga commit? Did he indulge in love jihad or cow smuggling? What anti-Hindu act did he commit?" Hariprasad was participating in a protest organised by Deshapremi Sanghatanegala Okkoota to mark Baliga's 10th death anniversary. He was hacked to death outside his home in Mangaluru.

Centre to give C'patna toys a boost

Bengaluru: The Centre has announced plans to establish a craft-based resource centre near Channapatna in Bengaluru South district, aimed at promoting wood-based handicrafts in the state.

The development was communicated in a letter by Union textiles minister Giriraj Singh to Rajya Sabha MP Lahar Singh Siroya. Giriraj Singh said that the govt recognises the potential of Channapatna — known for its traditional wooden toys — and is keen to boost indigenous handicrafts.

"However, such a decision will require the support of state govt agencies and allied departments. Be it land for the handicraft village or approvals for the project in the vicinity, the state govt needs to prepare a proposal for the purpose," said the minister in his letter.

The proposed resource centre will act as a precursor to a larger handicraft village planned under the National Handicrafts Development Programme.

Alongside the letter, Siroya, on social media, said the response came after he suggested in the Rajya Sabha that the Centre to consider a crafts village in Channapatna on the lines of Dilli Haat in New Delhi. TNN

Jarkiholi plays down dynasty politics jibes

Belagavi: Public works minister **Satish Jarkiholi** said he was confident Congress will secure victories in both Bagalkot and Davanagere assembly byelections, asserting the party "has fielded strong and winnable candidates".

Jarkiholi told reporters the party high command gave the Bagalkot ticket to Umesh Meti in line with strong public sentiment. "The Meti family enjoys considerable goodwill in the constituency," he said, adding groundwork for the election has been underway for the past two months.

He said that while he will participate in electioneering in Davanagere, his primary focus will be Bagalkot and that he will actively campaign there.

On criticism over dynastic politics, Jarkiholi said the practice is prevalent across parties. "Ultimately, parties must field candidates who can win," he said. TNN

In 3 years, 25 deaths in Krishi Bhagya ponds

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

TOI

WATERY GRAVE: Kolar recorded the highest number of deaths at 11, followed by Chikkaballapur, which had six

Bengaluru: Data tabled by the agriculture department in the assembly in the ongoing budget session shows 25 people died in agricultural ponds developed under the Krishi Bhagya scheme over the past three years.

District-wise figures show Kolar recorded the highest number of deaths at 11, followed by neighbouring Chikkaballapur (six). Mandya reported four fatalities, taking the toll in these three districts alone to 21.

But year-wise data points to a declining trend. A dozen deaths were reported in 2023-24, which dropped to seven in 2024-25 and further to six in 2025-26.

However, agriculture minister N Cheluvarayaswamy, in a written reply to a question from Yashavantaraygoud Vittalagoud Patil, said no deaths involving cattle were reported. The minister said the govt provides compensation of Rs 2 lakh to families of victims and has disbursed aid in 23 cases over the past three years.

Cheluvarayaswamy said the govt, in a circular dated Aug 11, 2025, has mandated safety measures, including fencing around ponds and provision of floating tubes and ropes, with a subsidy of 40% to 50% for such works.

Farmers are required to submit self-declarations on safety measures while applying and agriculture officers from Raita Samparka Kendras must verify installation of fencing. The guidelines also mandate placing warning signboards at pond sites and uploading geotagged photographs as proof of compliance.

Officials have been directed to spread awareness among farmers and submit periodic reports on implementation to the department headquarters and the chief executive officers of zilla panchayats.

Across K'taka, more than 50% of PHC officers' posts vacant

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mangaluru: More than 50% of the state's sanctioned primary healthcare officer (PHCO) posts — also known as auxiliary nurse midwives — remain vacant, with only 4,994 of 10,025 positions filled. The shortage is sharper among lady health visitors (LHVs), where over 65% of posts are vacant.

Of the 1,438 sanctioned LHV posts, only 491 are filled. In Dakshina Kannada district, which health minister Dinesh Gundu Rao oversees, only 251 of 444 sanctioned PHCO posts are occupied.

No new PHCO appointments have been made in the past 10 years, and none have been promoted to LHV positions in six years, Rekha Kumari M, vice-president, Karnataka Primary Health Care Officers Association told TOI.

"We have been submitting memorandums to health ministers and department secretaries for years, and the issue was discussed at the state-level at least six times, but no decision was taken," Kumari said. "The work jurisdiction for PHCOs is determined based on the population. Due to staff shortage, we are forced to cover more villages. Some of us cover responsibilities of three to five posts."

To make matters worse, she said, the govt has saddled staff with more work including the communicable diseases prevention programme.

"PHCOs have their own job chart which covers implementation of various govt schemes for maternal healthcare, prevention of maternal/infant mortality, family welfare etc," Kumari said. "Additional responsibilities not only affect our work but adds to job stress."

She said many PHCOs retire without getting a promotion, even after working for 30-35 years. "There were many instances of PHCOs being suspended due to work stress," she said.

BJP sets up teams for civic elections

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: BJP has set up teams of its functionaries to oversee the upcoming elections to the five city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA).

A 12-member team, headed by state BJP president **BY Vijayendra,** consists of MPs from the city, Union minister V Somanna, and leaders of the opposition in the legislative assembly and council. Two MLAs — S Suresh Kumar and CN Ashwath Narayan — have made it to the team.

The party has also formed one team each for the five city corporations and appointed a leader in charge of each of the 27 assembly constituencies in Bengaluru coming under GBA. The Bengaluru Central city corporation team is headed by MLC CT Ravi. The Bengaluru West city corporation team is the largest, with 10 members, headed by opposition leader R Ashoka. The teams for other corporations consist of 4-6 members.

BJP has appointed a woman member to each of the teams. State vice-president and spokesperson Malavika Avinash is part of the West team. Former general secretary of BJP Karnataka's Mahila Morcha, Sarojini Bharadwaj, has made it to the Central corporation team. MLC Bharathi Shetty and MLA Manjula Limbavali are part of the North and East teams, respectively. BJP state executive member Poornima Prakash is part of the South corporation team as a special invitee.

The last elections to the erstwhile BBMP, held in 2015, saw BJP win 100 of the 198 wards. However, only one of the last five mayors was a BJP councillor, while the rest were from Congress.

Meat seizure sparks row

Around 54kg of meat was seized in a raid at Gangavathi , Koppal district, during Eid Saturday, triggering a controversy, as Hindu Jagaran Vedike (HJV) alleged it was beef. The group demanded action against those responsible.

Acting on the information provided by the HJV activists, about alleged beef sale, police raided a tin shed near Huma School in HRS colony Saturday. During the inspection, meat, knives, a weighing machine, and other equipment were found. Police called veterinary officer Dr Niranjan from Sangapur and municipal authorities to the spot, and in their presence, seized 54kg meat, and registered a case.

Police said 3kg of the seized meat was collected as samples for lab testing.

Those allegedly involved in the sale are absconding. A case has been registered against the shed owner, Allahbakhshi, under the Karnataka Prevention of Cow Slaughter and Cattle Preservation Act, 2020. TNN

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Brothers, Sister, Family and Friends

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Suburban rail project: Trees translocated, but not saved

Report Flags Low Survival Of Trees

Anush.S@timesofindia.com

Muthu P

AT THE COST OF GREENS: Trees transplantation at KV school campus, Pampanagar Railway Parallel Road, Yeshwanthpur Saturday

According to the K-Ride report, this is the first quarter following the translocation of trees in NPK Layout. All 12 trees were translocated. During this quarter, none of the trees showed survival symptoms due to translocation shock and seasonal variation

Bengaluru: When the removal of thousands of trees for the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP) faced criticism from activists, the authorities vouched for transplanting as a remedy. But over three years down the line, less than half the trees replanted for Corridor 2 show signs of survival.

The tree translocation quarterly report published by Rail Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) Ltd (K-Ride), the implementing agency of the project, earlier this month revealed that only 125 trees out of the 279 trees transplanted until Dec 2025 had survived. The trees were removed from their original locations following five official memoranda from the erstwhile BBMP between Dec 2022 and July 2025. Except for the 12 trees translocated in 2025, the remaining 267 were planted around Yeshwantpur, within the CQAE Yeshwantpur Campus, Railway Colony, and quarters.

According to the report, the trees did not survive due to translocation shock, when trees do not adapt to the new environment. Among the tree varieties translocated were mahogany, tore matti, jamun, hebbevu, honge, raintree, benjamina, and sandal. Interestingly, during the last such translocation carried out in Sept 2025, all 12 trees did not show any signs of survival, with seasonal variations also contributing to this. This particular transplantation was done by an agency engaged by BDA.

'Avoid cutting them'

Ecologist Harini Nagendra told **TOI:** "Basically, what you do is cut the roots and the branches while transporting, and then you pull them out of the soil and put them into the new soil. That whole process is for them to grow the roots and shoots again, and become accustomed to the new environment." She also stressed that the first option should always be to avoid cutting trees, and the translocation process does not guarantee success despite consuming a lot of money.

City-based civic activist Rajkumar Duggar expressed shock over the survival figures. "I'm really shocked at these figures; we wasted so much time and money on this. Even 95% survival is a failure, as you are losing a significant number of trees. K-Ride should drop this idea of transplanting," he opined.

K-Ride, however, maintained that tree translocation involves inherent biological risks, and survival largely depends on species characteristics, root adaptability, seasonal conditions, and post-translocation stress factors. "Most of the trees translocated were mature ones and a few species that do not adapt to translocation. The trees that were indigenous and young survived uprooting and translocation. Initially, 45–50% was the survival rate, but with the application of hormones and medicines and a scientific method of translocation, the survival rate has now gone up to 60–65%," a K-Ride official said.

The implementing agency also added that a total of 3,260 compensatory trees were planted on the GKVK campus, with maintenance activities, including watering, protection, and periodic monitoring, undertaken by the GBA's forest wing.

Lamborghini stunt leads cops to late don Muthappa Rai's son

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A day after the pre-dawn drifting stunt by a Lamborghini in central Bengaluru drew police scrutiny, investigators traced the high-end car to the residence of Ricky Rai, son of late underworld figure Muthappa Rai, escalating a case that began with a viral video.

The incident, captured and widely shared on social media Saturday morning, shows the car performing controlled skids near Anil Kumble Circle on MG Road between 2am and 3am.

Acting suo motu, Cubbon Park traffic police initiated an inquiry within hours. By late Saturday, a police team had tracked the vehicle to Rai's residence in RMV Extension near Sankey Tank in Sadashivanagar and seized it.

Drifting is a stunt in which the driver deliberately oversteers, causing the rear wheels to lose traction and slide while navigating a turn.

TOI

The car performing controlled skids near Anil Kumble Circle on MG Road between 2am and 3am

While typically performed in controlled environments, executing such manoeuvres on public roads is considered dangerous due to the risk posed to other motorists.

Two notices served to Rai

According to a senior officer, two notices have been served to Rai—one late Saturday and the other Sunday—asking him to appear before the investigating officer. He has not yet responded.

Investigators have also found that the Lamborghini, which was originally registered in the name of a Delhi-based individual, was sold to Rai. Police have now contacted the Regional Transport Office (RTO) to verify current ownership records.

CCTV shows 2 people inside car during stunt

CCTV footage from the area indicates that two people were inside the car during the stunt. However, authorities have not yet identified who was driving at the time.

The complaint, filed by constable Shanmukha N, states that the act posed a serious hazard and distracted other road users. A case has been registered under Sections 184 (dangerous driving) and 189 (racing and speed trials) of the Motor Vehicles Act, along with Section 281 (rash driving on a public way) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita,.

Police said efforts are under way to identify the driver and initiate further legal action.

Teen murder: Fiancé held in Rajasthan

Times News Network

Bengaluru: Nearly a week after a 16-year-old girl was found murdered in a deserted house in DJ Halli, police have arrested her 25-year-old fiance in Rajasthan's Ajmer, marking a key breakthrough in the case.

The accused, **Syed Sabeel**, a resident of Kushalnagar in KG Halli, had been on the run since the incident. He was tracked down and arrested in Ajmer, and police are now initiating procedures to bring him back to Bengaluru on a transit warrant.

The victim, Joya Fathima from Kolar district, was found with her throat slit inside a dilapidated house reportedly belonging to Sabeel's family on March 17. The house, located in DJ Halli, was known to be a meeting spot for the couple.

Fathima frequently visited her aunt, Vajeeda Begum, in DJ Halli. During these visits, she had developed a relationship with Sabeel, who assists his father in running an onion shop. Following this, both families arranged their engagement in June last year.

However, tensions are said to have emerged after Fathima continued to meet Sabeel discreetly. On the morning of March 17, Fathima went missing from her aunt's house. Her phone, left behind, immediately raised concern. Attempts to contact Sabeel also failed. Acting on a tip-off from Sabeel's mother, Vajeeda went to the abandoned house where the couple would meet. Inside, she found Fathima lying in a pool of blood with a deep cut injury to her throat.

Preliminary checks showed that the last call from Fathima's phone had been made to Sabeel.

An officer said the accused is yet to be interrogated to establish the motive.

Rape, extortion cases against suspended PI

Mangaluru: Police have registered a case of extortion and rape against a suspended police inspector in Mangaluru district.

Dakshina Kannada SP Arun K said the cases are registered against suspended police inspector Sandesh at Venoor police station.

According to sources, the complainant has alleged that Sandesh sexually assaulted her when he was serving at Belthangady police station.

Sandesh was placed under suspension recently by the commissioner, following allegations of misconduct. TNN

ALMANAC (23.3.2026)

Meena Masa 09 Shri Parabhava Nama Samvatsara – Uttarayana – Vasantha Ritu - Tithi: Chaitra Sukla Panchami h. 18-39 Nakshatra: Krittika h. 20-50 Yoga: Viskumbha h. 12-22. 3 Shawwal Kali Day 1872657 Sri (Lakshmi) Panchami

Rahu Kalam 7.30-9am

— KL Vidya Shankara Somayaji

2 brothers drown in river during swim

Two brothers drowned in Tungabhadra river while swimming Sunday evening at Haluvagalu village, Harapanahalli taluk, in front of their father. He managed to save his youngest son, but could not rescue the other two.

The deceased has been identified as MG Manu, 19, son of farmer Manjappa.

Manjappa went to the river with his three sons. The boys lost balance and were swept away by the current. Manjappa managed to rescue his youngest son, Chiranjeevi, but the other two brothers drowned before his eyes. TNN

Mallikarjun claims party thrust responsibility on Shamanur family

▶ Continued from page 1

Samarth's father Mallikarjun is a Karnataka minister and mother is MP from Davanagere.

Sources claimed Mallikarjun demanded a ticket for son **Samarth** as the family patriarch Shivashankarappa was president of All India Veerashaiva Linagayat Mahasabha and his legacy could not be ignored. "As a result, it was decided to hand the ticket to Samarth," said a senior leader present at the meeting Saturday night.

On a third member from his family entering electoral politics, Mallikarjun said the party, including the CM, deputy CM and AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, thrust the responsibility on the Shamanur family.

Ticket to Umesh in Bagalkot

In Bagalkot, Congress gave a ticket to Umesh. His sister Mahadevi had threatened to contest as a rebel candidate if Umesh didn't land a ticket. Both chief minister siddaramaiah and the deputy chief minister Shivakumar would travel to both constituencies on Monday at the time of filing nomination papers.

Pink Line: RDSO trials may start this month

Anush.S@timesofindia.com

File photo

Inspection to take at least two weeks, said a BMRCL official

Bengaluru: The much-anticipated Pink Line of the Namma Metro will soon undergo Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO) trials as it targets a mid-2026 rollout.

"RDSO trials could start before the end of the month; there are some more formalities left. The inspection could take at least two weeks to be completed," a BMRCL official said.

RDSO tests are mandatory safety and performance trials for Metro systems in India to ensure that new rolling stock and infrastructure meet operational standards before public commissioning.

The 21km corridor includes a 13km underground section between Dairy Circle and Nagawara. While the elevated stretch between Kalena Agrahara and Tavarekere is targeted for opening by mid-2026, the full corridor is slated for completion only by Dec 2026.

As of now, four trainsets have already been delivered to BMRCL by Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML). The elevated section of the Pink Line is initially expected to operate with 4-5 trainsets.

HC OKs minor works within Roerich estate

Niranjan.Kaggere
@timesofindia.com

TOI

ICONIC ESTATE

Bengaluru: Green activists opposing the proposed mega eco-tourism project at the Roerich and Devika Rani Roerich Estate on the city's southern outskirts suffered a setback after Karnataka high court granted partial relief to the state govt earlier this week. Softening its earlier direction barring all development activity, the court has now allowed limited works in the estate's non-forest areas.

In Jan 2026, while hearing a PIL petition filed by the RR Nagar I Care Trust, the court had directed both the state and central govts to ensure no development at the estate. The petition challenged a Dec 2024 notification approving an eco-tourism and cultural hub project. During the latest hearing, the state submitted that the central funds would lapse by March 31, if work remained stalled. "Some of the works as part of the project do not even require diversion of forest land in any manner," the govt argued, while also seeking permission for landscaping and basic infrastructure work.

It also told the court that high footfall necessitated the construction of toilets. "Otherwise, this would result in the pollution of waterbodies located on the estate," the govt said. Citing frequent wildlife movement, it also proposed an elephant barricade and boundary wall, maintaining that these would not involve forest land diversion. Accepting the plea, the court observed, "In the aforesaid circumstances, we consider it apposite to modify the interim order to permit certain developments at this stage. The interim order shall not apply to the construction of the entrance plaza, toilets, borewells, elephant barricades, boundary wall, and a landscaped garden. However, the respondents shall ensure that not a single tree is cut or damaged in the process."

Elephant trouble

Days before the order, an elephant herd went on a rampage at the estate. "The herd came up to the main building of the estate and the living quarters of the security personnel. While they did not cause any damage to the building, several trees and small structures in front of it were uprooted and the garden was trampled," said a security staffer. Forest officials confirmed the incident but declined to elaborate.

Guidance value not confined to registrations: HC

▶ Continued from page 1

KSFC pegged the value at Rs 40.8 lakh as per its methodology. This was challenged by Parwati.

Justice Suraj Govindaraj noted that the petitioner's calculation was based on the guidance value. When such a value was available and recognised by multiple statutory authorities, it would not be appropriate for another instrumentality of the state to adopt a drastically lower valuation methodology, the judge noted.

According to the court, guidance value is not confined to registrations. The same value is taken into consideration in various other contexts. For instance, under Section 50C of Income-Tax Act, 1961, the value adopted by the stamp valuation authority is treated as the deemed sale consideration for the purpose of computation of capital gains, the judge said. It's used as a metric to determine the market value of land.

The internal valuation methodology prescribed under Clause 13.2 may be justified in situations where no guidance value is available, or where the property continues to remain purely agricultural, he said. The court issued a directive to KSFC to consider the petitioner's application as per the market valuation. If the respondents have doubts about the certificates, then they could seek clarification and/or valuation from the sub-registrar.

WHAT IF THE BEST OPPORTUNITIES ARE CLOSER TO HOME?

A shift in global education choices may already be underway.

For years, the US was the go-to destination for students planning their future.

But changing visa norms and uncertain job prospects are beginning to shift that certainty. What once felt like a clear path is now being questioned more closely.

Read the Wealth+ page tomorrow for a clearer view on what's changing.

IN WITH THE NEWS, OUT WITH THE NOISE.

TOI WEALTH+
EVERY TUESDAY

Call 1800 1200 004 or visit subscribe.timesofindia.com and get started with your copy of The Times of India.

THE TIMES OF INDIA
CHANGE Begins Here

TIMES NATION

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026

2 MORE RAPE CASES AGAINST NASHIK ASTROLOGER, MAHA CM FADNAVIS SAYS NO ONE WOULD BE SPARED

WITH 24 HRS LEFT FOR FILING NOMINATIONS IN PONDY, STALEMATE CONTINUES BETWEEN DMK AND CONGRESS

Domestic help's 19-year-old daughter wins shot put gold

Krishna.Chaudhary
@timesofindia.com

Bareilly: The daughter of a housemaid from Meerut, who was born without her left hand below the elbow, won gold in shot put at the National Para-Athletics Championship in Bhubaneswar, completing a journey shaped by financial hardship, a driver father's abandoned sporting dream and a family's struggle to meet even an athlete's basic nutritional needs.

Ria Solanki, 19, began training in shot put in 2018, with her father, Anshuman, working as a driver and her mother, Sakshi, working as a housemaid to support the family. Her rise in the sport came despite severe financial constraints and her disability that often made it difficult for the family to provide the diet and support needed for regular training.

Sakshi told **TOI** that arranging the nutrition required for an athlete was the hardest part of the journey. "The biggest hurdle was meeting her nutritional needs. We cut down on our own food so that she could get protein-rich meals. She felt bad seeing that, but she stayed determined and kept working hard. Today, that effort has paid off," she said.

Ria Solanki, 19, celebrates her victory with relatives in Meerut

When **TOI** visited Ria's home on Sunday, relatives were arriving with greetings and the single-room rented house was filled with the family's quiet celebration. For Sakshi, the medal brought back years of uncertainty, when the household had no fixed income and every decision had to be made around work, food and the children's future.

Back home, Wangchuk strikes a conciliatory tone

Calls For 'Give And Take', Does Not Mention 6th Schedule

Naseer.Ganai
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Srinagar: As hundreds of people gathered in Leh to welcome environmental activist and Leh Apex Body (LAB) member Sonam Wangchuk after his release from jail, he struck a conciliatory tone on Sunday, urging the Union govt to ensure that forthcoming talks with Ladakhi leaders are based on a "win-win" approach for both Ladakh and the Centre.

While he emphasised on a "give and take" formula without mentioning the Sixth Schedule or statehood in his address to the gathering, at the same time, Wangchuk said he would continue his struggle, if needed. The reception was organised by LAB, which along with Kargil Democratic Alliance, is seeking statehood and a Sixth Schedule for the UT of Ladakh.

"My fight was for Ladakh's people, its culture, environment, for its rivers, flora and fauna, and glaciers. Their success is my success," Wangchuk said, as people carried banners reading 'Justice for Ladakh', 'Withdraw Sept 24 cases', and 'Ladakh will not forget its fallen heroes', along with portraits of four people killed in the police firing in Leh on Sept 24 last year.

TOI

Sonam Wangchuk has called for flexible steps in the movement for statehood for Ladakh

Describing the movement as a "new dawn", he said it was entering a "new phase", but he called for "flexible steps". He said he had been told the govt had acknowledged the Sept 24 firing as a mistake and was seeking to rectify it. He hoped that justice would be delivered in the case and those arrested would also be released.

Wangchuk was arrested on Sept 26, 2025 under NSA and lodged in Jodhpur jail. Last week, MHA revoked his detention stating the govt remains committed to providing all necessary safeguards for Ladakh and hoped that the issues concerning the region will be resolved through "constructive engagement and dialogue".

The last round of talks took place on Feb 4, but remained inconclusive. Ladakhi leaders have sought another round of talks soon.

Wangchuk said Ladakhi leaders will go for talks with hope that there is a win-win outcome. He said talks shouldn't turn into otherwise as is being rumoured in the region, and hoped the govt would prove him wrong.

Holding his cards close to his chest, Wangchuk said after forthcoming talks, Ladakhi leaders would again reach out to people across the country and convey whether the talks resulted in a "win-win or a lose-lose outcome".

Parents leave one-month-old girl at home to beg, she dies of starvation

Krishna.Chaudhary
@timesofindia.com

Bareilly: A one-month-old girl died allegedly due to starvation and illness after her jobless parents left her and two other siblings alone at home and went out to beg on Friday. The family lives in Qila Cantonment area of Bareilly. The child's father, Mohd Shadab, has been living with his family in a rented house for the past four months.

According to local residents, Shadab was involved in the manjha (kite string) trade and lost his job during the Covid-19 pandemic, but could not secure a job after that.

Though he got some temporary assistance from people, he was eventually forced into begging to sustain his family. Around 11am on Friday, Shadab and his wife, Hina, left their three children, one aged one month and the other two kids, aged 1year-

2nd TRAGEDY

and-six months and four years, at home and went out to seek alms. When they returned around 6pm, they found their one-month-old daughter unresponsive.

"When the family started preparations to bury the body, police were alerted around 10pm, said Qila SHO Subash Kumar. A police team arrived and took custody of the body and sent it for postmortem. The body was handed over to the family after autopsy.

"The autopsy report cited illness and infection as the cause of death. However, locals claimed that the infant died due to starvation," SHO Kumar told TOI on Sunday.

TOI on Sunday reached Shadab's house, but he had vacated the room after he failed to pay the rent. TOI tried to contact him, but he was unreachable. Neighbours said they were not aware of his whereabouts. A local resident said this is not the first such tragedy in the family. The couple had earlier lost a child, aged six months, under similar circumstances.

Stray dogs kill 15 deer at Ch'garh rescue centre

Raipur: Fifteen deer died after stray dogs entered their enclosure and bit them at Sanjay Park rescue centre in Ambikapur district, prompting the state forest department to suspend four employees, order an inquiry and issue a notice to the local forest ranger, reports **Rashmi Drolia**.

The attack took place Friday night, when four to five stray dogs reportedly entered the park from the adjoining forest. Officials said the enclosure gate was allegedly left open.

Park staff discovered the carcasses on Saturday morning. While 14 deer were dead, one succumbed to its injuries on Sunday. Surguja divisional forest officer Abhishek Jogawat confirmed the deaths were due to dog bites.

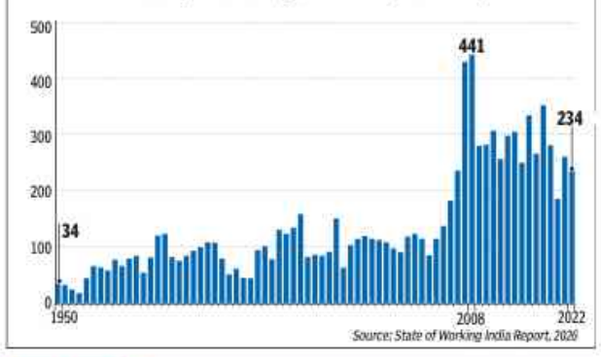
The park was shut for three days, officials said adding that the park had 31 deer before the incident.

STATOISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Public colleges have halved since their peak in 2008

The number of public colleges in India peaked at 441 in 2008. It has since declined to almost half that number in subsequent years

No. of public colleges in India (1950-2022)



Source: State of Working India Report, 2026

HACK OF THE DAY — **SUMMARISE HUNDREDS OF UNREAD WHATSAPP MESSAGES**

WHAT IT SOLVES: Helps you catch up on overloaded chats without reading every unread message one by one

WHAT TO DO: Use WhatsApp's message summaries with Meta AI to get a quick catch-up on unread messages when the feature is available to you

STEPS:

1. **Open** individual or group chat you have not caught up on
2. **Tap** unread message indicator above unread messages
3. **Enable** message summaries if prompted
4. **Read** summary to understand main points before diving in
5. **Use** this for noisy groups, family planning chats, school announcements, or event threads

NOTE: Availability may vary, and this is optional. It is most useful for catching up fast, not for replacing careful reading of critical details

Hacks are based on verified public sources. Readers are advised to follow official websites & updated rules

SCAN FOR MORE

25001/360/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SUNDARGARH
AT/PO-SANKARA, SUNDARGARH-770020, E-mail address-scrw_sundargarh@yahoo.com

No. Tender Online – RWCCESNG –41 of 2025-26 , Letter No 1845 /Dtd. 19.03.2026

e-Procurement NOTICE

1. Type of the Work: Buildings
2. Class of Contractor: As specified in the column-6 of the Annexure
3. Time of Completion: As specified in the column-5 of the Annexure
4. Detail Projects: As per Annexure attached
5. Estimated Cost : As specified in the column-4 of the Annexure
6. Other details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of Seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh	RWCCESNG-41 of 2025-26	25.03.2026 11:00 AM	10.04.2026 5:00 PM	09.04.2026 5:00 PM	13.04.2026 11:00 AM	Will be intimated separately

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd/- Chief Construction Engineer
Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh

OIPR - 25001/25133/1/25-26/0050

13001/730/2526

BHUBANESWAR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
AKASH SHOVA BUILDING,
SACHIVALAYA MARG, BHUBANESWAR - 751001
PABX No. 0674-2392801/0998/6437, FAX No. 0674-2390633 / 085
Visit us at : http://www.bda.gov.in/

Invitation for Bids

Bid Identification No. 156/EM/BDA/2025-26 **Date : 18.03.2026**

Engineer Member, BDA on behalf of Bhubaneswar Development Authority, Bhubaneswar invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for civil works as mentioned below:

1. Name of works : Construction of Toilet block along with water supply & sewerage system to transit accommodation at Niladri Vihar, Bhubaneswar.
2. Total No. of works : 01 (one) No.
3. Amount put to tender : Rs. 1.21 Crore
4. Class of Contractor : 'B'&'A' class
5. Period of Completion : 04 (Four) Calendar months
6. Cost of Bid Documents : Rs. 10000.00+18% GST Rs.11800.00 (Online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids)
7. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) : 1% of estimated cost put to tender. (Online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids)
8. Availability of Tender : From 23.03.2026 to 5.30 PM of 06.04.2026 **https://tendersodisha.gov.in**.
9. Date of opening of Tender : Dt. 07.04.2026 at 11.30 AM
10. Place of opening of Tender : O/o Engineer Member, BDA, Bhubaneswar.

Further details can be seen from the website: **https://tendersodisha.gov.in**. Any addendum /corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Sd/-
Engineer Member
BDA, Bhubaneswar

OIPR - 13001/13033/1/25-26/0052

32001/238/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER
ANGUL IRRIGATION CIRCLE, ANGUL, ODISHA, PIN – 759143
email :aceangulirrigationcircle@gmail.com
Government of Odisha "e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Bid Identification No. ACEAIC- 03 /2025-26

Sl. No.	Name of work	Estimated cost	Class of Contractor	Period of completion	Date and Time of availability of bid document in the portal	Last date/time for receipt of bid in the portal	Name & Address of the Officer Inviting Bid
01	Construction of Flood protection to left bank of river Mahanadi at U/s and D/s of Dhalapur bridge of Athmallik Block.	Rs.591.86 lakh	"A" Class	12(Twelve Calendar Months including rainy season)	25.03.2026 at 10.00 AM	09.04.2026 up to 5.30 PM	Additional Chief Engineer, Angul Irrigation Circle, Angul

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal http://tendersodisha.gov.in.
Any corrigendum/ addendum/cancellation will be displayed in the **Govt.Website only**.

-Sd-
Additional Chief Engineer,
Angul Irrigation Circle, Angul.

OIPR-32001/32081/1/25-26/0016

34001/238/2526

OFFICE OF THE
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER ELECTRICAL CIRCLE (R&B)
NIRMAN SOUDHA BHUBANESWAR
E-mail : seec.bbsr2010@gmail.com
Bid Identification No.S.E.E.C (R&B) 36/2025-26
No 1104 Date 18.03.2026

The Superintending Engineer, Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for E.I. works which are to be received through online bidding, double cover system as detailed in :**https://tendersorissa.gov.in**. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website from dt.25.03.2026 at 05.00 P.M. to dt.09.04.2026 up to 05.00 P.M. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened dt.10.04.2026 at 11.30 A.M. in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, Bhubaneswar. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal **www.tendersorissa.gov.in.**

Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer
Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, BBSR

OIPR-34001/34006/1/25-26/0025

34001/240/2526

Mail ID: sepwdsbp@rediffmail.com

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
NORTHERN (R&B) CIRCLE SAMBALPUR
e - Procurement
BID IDENTIFICATION No CCENC (R AND B)/24/2025-26
No. 1345 Dtd. 17.03.2026

1. The **Chief Construction Engineer, Northern (R&B) Circle, Sambalpur** on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites **Percentage Rate** bids in double cover system **in ONLINE MODE** for the construction of **Building Work** as detailed in the DTCN from the eligible class of contractors.
2. No of works: **12 (TWELVE) (BUILDING Works)**
3. Tender Cost: **Rs. 10,000/-**
4. Class of contractor: **"B" Class, "A" Class and "Special" Class**
5. Date & Time of available in website & receipt of Bids From **25.03.2026 to 17.00 Hours of 09.04.2026.**
6. Date of opening of Technical Bid **10.04.2026 at 11.00 Hours.**
7. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website **www.tendersodisha.gov.in.**
8. Any corrigendum / Addendum will be displayed in the website **www.tendersodisha.gov.in.**

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Northern (R&B) Circle, Sambalpur

OIPR-34001/34035/1/25-26/0029

25001/351/2526

ଅତିରିକ୍ତ ମୁଖ୍ୟଯନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ
ଗ୍ରାମାଞ୍ଚଳ ପାନୀୟଜଳ ଯୋଗାଣ ଓ ପରିମଳ ମଣ୍ଡଳ ,କୋରାପୁଟ

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONNAL ENGINEER
RURAL WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION CIRCLE, KORAPUT

At- D.N.K Road, Beside Fire Station Koraput, Pin-764020 Email- acerwsskpt@gmail.com

Tender Identification No. 02/ACE/RWSS/KPT/2025-26/19.03.2026

The Additional Chief Engineer, RWS&S Circle, Koraput on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate Bids in Double cover (P1 contract) from the eligible class of experienced registered contractors through e-Tendering system for the Piped water supply works as detailed in DTCN. The bid should be submitted on-line in the website **www.tenderorissa.gov.in** separately for the works.

1. Nature of work. : 1. Rural piped water supply to village Deobharandi PH-I of G.P Naktisemoda under Raighar Block in the district of Nabarangpur.
   2. Rural piped water supply to village Chhatabeda PH-I of G.P Parua under Raighar Block in the district of Nabarangpur.
2. Time period for completion : Eleven (11) Months.
3. Estimated Cost. : Varies from Rs. 168.06 Lakhs to Rs. 396.54 Lakh respectively
4. Total Nos of works : 2 nos.
5. Tender cost : Rs. 10,000.00/- Each.
6. Class of Contractor : "B" & "A"
7. Availability of Bid document in the website : Dt. 26.03.2026 at 17.00 hours to 06.04.2026 up to 17.00 hours.
8. Last Date of Seeking clarification : During the Office hours of 02.04.2026
9. Date of Opening of Bid : Dt. 07.04.2026 at 11.00 AM

* **Note:** The amount put to tender is exclusive of GST. The intending bidders should offer their rates which shall be exclusive of GST applicable as per norms. GST applicable on works contract shall be paid over the bill amount at the time of payment of bill.

Further details can be seen in the bidding documents which is available in the e-procurement portal **https/www.tendersorissa.gov.in** Subsequent corrigendum if required shall be appeared in the website. Authority reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- **Addl. Chief Engineer**
RWS&S Circle, Koraput

OIPR-25001/25115/1/25-26/0002

4001/82/2526

ODISHA HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(A GOVT. OF ODISHA UNDERTAKING)
CIN: U40101OR1995SGC003963
REGD.OFFICE: OHPC Corporate Office, Bhoi Nagar, Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022
Phone: 91-0674-2542983, 2542802, 2545526, Fax- 2542102
E-mail: ohpc.co@gmail.com

No. OHPC: OHPC: TECH: C&P:/61/25-26/ 2486 Date: 18.03.2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER No.11/ 25-26

Sealed tenders are invited in two parts i.e. (i) Techno Commercial Bid & (ii) Price Bid in separate sealed envelopes from consultants empanelled in the vendor list of Odisha Space Application Centre (ORSAC) to undertake DGPS / ETS survey having valid GST Registration Certificate & IT PAN, and fulfilling the other eligibility criteria as per the terms & conditions for the work mentioned in the tender specifications:

Description of Services	Cost of Tender papers in shape of DD/BC in Rs. (Non-Refundable)	EMD in shape of DD/BG/BC/ Insurance surety bond only (Refundable) in Rs.
ENGAGEMENT OF CONSULTANT FOR DEMARCATION, PREPARATION OF LAND SCHEDULE, DGPS SURVEY AND TO OBTAIN FOREST CLEARANCE UNDER FOREST (CONSERVATION) ACT 1980 FOR CONSTRUCTION OF UPPER KOLAB PUMPED STORAGE PROJECT IN THE DISTRICT OF KORAPUT, ODISHA.	11,800/- (10,000/- + GST @ 18%)	1,25,000/-

For details of the tender documents, terms & conditions please visit/ refer our website www.olpcltd.com from **Dt.24.03.2026.**

C & P Head

OIPR-4001/4088/1/25-26/0007

TRANSMISSION CORPORATION OF ANDHRA PRADESH LIMITED
(A Government of Andhra Pradesh Undertaking & An ISO 27001-2022 Certified Company)

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

The APTRANSCO invites bids on e-procurement platform for supply of i) ACSS/RW Panther Conductor - 100KM ii) ACSS/RW Zebra Conductor-100KM and iii) ACSS/RW Moose Conductor-100KM as per Specification No. **PMM22-e-20/2026**. Bidding documents are available at **www.tender.apeprocurement.gov.in.** Date of availability of Bids on **Dt: 23.03.2026 @ 5.00 P.M.**

Sd/- Chief Engineer/Transmission,
Vidyuth Soudha, Vijayawada, APTRANSCO

RO No.: GMCC/APTRANSCO/76/26

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-Tendering Tender Notice

Divisional Railway Manager (Works) N.C. Railway, Jhansi for and on behalf of President of India invites sealed "Open Tender" through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following work.

E-Tender No.: JHS-ENGG-N-2026-54

Description of work: Virangana Lakshmibai Jhansi - Gwalior - TBSR (H-Beam) - 1677 Nos.

Approx Cost : ₹ 60800560.64	Earnest Money: ₹ 454000.00

Date of closing Tender: 13.04.2026 at **15.00** hrs.

Date of completion/period from issue acceptance letter: 09 Months

- Tender online can be submitted up to **15:00** hrs on **13.04.2026**
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I VINAY KANUNGA s/o of late parasmal r/o binnypet bangalore have changed my name from VINAY KUMAR to VINAY KANUNGA for all future purposes

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Suicide case: FIR against axed Punjab mantri

Amritsar: Punjab police have registered a criminal case against dismissed cabinet minister Laljit Singh Bhullar, his father and his personal assistant following the suicide of Punjab State Warehousing Corporation district manager Gagandeep Singh Randhawa in Amritsar, **reports Yudhvir Rana**.

The FIR filed late on Saturday names Bhullar, his father Sukhdev Singh Bhullar, and aide Dilbagh Singh alias Baga under BNS provisions related to abetment of suicide, criminal intimidation and common intention. Police have not announced any arrests so far.

Before his death on Friday, Randhawa allegedly left behind a video blaming Bhullar. Chief minister Bhagwant Mann asked Bhullar to step down, saying no official should be driven to such an extreme. Bhullar denied any wrongdoing and called for a thorough probe. The FIR followed a complaint by Randhawa's wife, Upinder Kaur, a science teacher and mother of three.

Civilian posted at IAF base held for passing info to Pak

Jaipur: A 36-year-old civilian employee posted at an Air Force station in Assam was arrested Sunday for allegedly passing sensitive military information to Pakistan-based handlers, in what officials said was a joint Rajasthan Intelligence-Air Force Intelligence operation that exposed a wider espionage network, **reports Dishank Purohit**.

The accused, Sumit Kumar, a resident of Prayagraj in UP, was working as multitasking staff at Air Force Station Chabua, Assam. Investigators said he had been in contact with Pakistani intelligence operatives since 2023 and had allegedly been sharing confidential information for money. The case dates to Jan, when Rajasthan Intelligence arrested Jaisalmer resident Jhabraram. During interrogation, Kumar's name emerged as a key link in the network, and agencies placed him under surveillance.

Few women get past collegium's subjective assessment: SC judge

'But In Merit-Based Selections They Get Over 50% of Judge Posts'

Dhananjay.Mahapatra
@timesofindia.com

> **Why is it that when the assessment becomes subjective, women do not make the grade? Out of 287 SC judges since 1950, we had a total of only 11 women judges. Why? Starting with Fathima Beevi and now Justice Nagarathna, it is some 2%**
> **JUSTICE UJJAL BHUYAN**

New Delhi: Supreme Court judge Justice Ujjal Bhuyan on Sunday said in merit-based selections, women secure more than 50% of judicial officers' posts across states, but in the collegium's subjective assessment criteria, only a minuscule get selected as judges of high courts and SC.

Addressing the Supreme Court Bar Association's first national conference at Bengaluru, Justice Bhuyan said that judicial services across states had a very good representation of women, some even crossing the 50% mark. "But has it been replicated in constitutional courts? That is the question. That is where the scrutiny of the collegium system comes in. Why is it that when the assessment becomes subjective, women do not make it to the grade? Out of 287 SC judges since 1950, we had a total of only 11 women judges. Why? Starting with Fathima Beevi and now Justice Nagarathna, it is some 2%," he said.

Justice Bhuyan said women made up only 14% of HC judges. "In the 25 HCs, we have only two women chief justices (CJs) — Gujarat and Meghalaya. One more will become CJ in a month's time. That is also highly inadequate, three out of 25 HCs," he said.

"My research shows that whenever the recruitment process is objective, more women enter the judicial space. When India becomes a developed nation (Viksit Bharat by 2047), there should be more parity in gender representation in judiciary. SC must be a rainbow institution, truly reflecting the diversity of the nation," Justice Bhuyan said.

Former CJI B R Gavai said there were multiple SC rulings that stated if the name of a person recommended for judgeship in an HC was returned for reconsideration by govt and reiterated by the collegium, govt had no option but to appoint them. "But there are many instances where even after repeated reiterations, the persons have not been appointed," he said, adding, "The collegium is not a perfect system but at least for the time being, it is best suited for the country."

He said the judiciary had been criticised mainly for its inability to tackle arrears and backlogs, delay in disposal of cases at various levels, lack of transparency in administrative decision-making (appointment of judges), long vacations, and lack of diversity, particularly representation of women in constitutional courts. The former CJI said SC had erred on many instances, including in the first major judgment related to right to life in the A K Gopalan case to the Emergency-era A D M Jabalpur case. "Criticism is important for any institution, including the judiciary," he said.

He recalled the first speech of the first CJI, Harilal Jekisondas Kania, who had said SC must operate independent of the legislature and the executive while interpreting the Constitution as a living document.

Justice Bhuyan said, "SC must earn the respect of citizens, not demand it... Judicial power relies not just on law but trust and legitimacy. Accountability, integrity and transparency must be made essential for the judiciary to function effectively in a democratic society. The judiciary neither has the purse nor the sword. Its only asset is the goodwill of people, which is the core of judicial strength."

He said in a developed nation, institutions must have functional autonomy. "Investigating agencies as well as the media should be able to discharge their duties without any political interference or control. Development should be in accordance with directive principles of state policy and no one should be left out of development, especially those who have been historically neglected."

AI can never perform core job of judgment writing: SC judge

Dhananjay.Mahapatra
@timesofindia.com

'NOT A REPLACEMENT'

New Delhi: Supreme Court's most senior judge, Justice Vikram Nath, on Sunday said artificial intelligence could at best be a facilitator for the justice delivery system but could never replace the core task — writing judgments — which would always remain with judges.

Speaking on 'Challenges, innovations and role of AI in judicial governance' at the Supreme Court Bar Association's first national conference in Bengaluru, Justice Nath said, "AI can be used as a tool to augment the judicial system, but it cannot replace the judgment or judges' minds as to what is to be decided."

Justice Nath said, "There can be no fixed data set in millions of cases dealt by courts. Take, for example, matrimonial cases, settlement of commercial cases, balancing equities — the court can understand the nuances of each case, which is factually different from the other, by reading papers and hearing the counsel. Judges alone know how to strike a balance in family partition suits."

He added, "AI cannot decide cases involving constitutional issues. There are innumerable complexities in criminal cases — how to appreciate the evidence, when to grant bail; in the same FIR there can be 10 accused, court may grant bail to nine but deny one. AI can't deal with all these. AI is there to help us in several aspects — collate data, categorise cases, translations etc. But the judgment will remain with judges only." Justice Nath also commended the initiative taken by SCBA president Vikas Singh on the conference.

SC judge A G Masih said, "AI is not here to replace lawyers and judges. Data-driven intelligence cannot replace human conscience. The act of the courts rests on public faith to deliver justice by carefully balancing rights and liabilities and undertaking an assessment of factual circumstances with a human heart. Feelings cannot be replicated by AI, which can facilitate judicial activities but cannot substitute them."

The judge said there seemed to be a need to institutionalise guidelines for court technology and, perhaps, create a judicial-tech oversight board to maintain and check AI tools for bias and to review an automated draft.

Senior advocate Sajan Poovayya said hallucination was implicit in mankind and mankind made AI. Therefore, hallucination was also implicit in AI and it was that which made it dangerous for the judiciary as it presented case law and logic that was non-existent or imaginary, he said.

Delhi HC Chief Justice D K Upadhyay brought up the use of AI-assisted judgment drafting software in countries like Brazil, Argentina, Singapore, the UK, the UAE and China. "Collectively, AI is increasingly integrated in multiple domains of judicial governance from administrative efficiency to substantive support functions, while simultaneously raising important questions about accountability, fairness and limits of automation in the judicial system," he said.

Justice Upadhyay added, "AI-manipulated images, deepfakes deployed maliciously undermine the integrity of evidence and adversely impact administration of justice. Courts may have to re-examine the traditional reliance on photographs and videos... Burden on parties to establish authenticity will increase and the judiciary would have to rely more on forensic tests of such evidence."

'Average conviction rate at around 5%'

▶ Continued from page 1

Presenting data — from 2019 till 2023 — of people arrested under UAPA, he said thousands have been arrested, but the average conviction rate hovered around 5%. "It shows consistently low conviction. What does it indicate — overuse if not misuse (of the law) and its impact on the criminal justice system. How much burden does it put on courts? This shows the vast majority were arrested but could not be convicted. This indicates many arrests were premature and unsupported by sufficient evidence," he said.

"With a general conviction rate of 5% or less, and acquittal of more than 95% of UAPA cases, why should an accused be kept in jail without even filing a chargesheet against him? This can't be a model of Viksit Bharat," said **Justice Bhuyan**, adding that such case overload causes backlog, pendency, and delay in justice delivery, together impacting the general principle of 'bail is the norm and jail the exception'.

He said in Viksit Bharat there should be more room for debate and dissent. "Debate should not be criminalised. There should be more tolerance towards diverse views. Divergent views should be respected. There should be more tolerance towards diverse views and criticism," he said. Justice Bhuyan said the political executive has fixed a goal for a developed India. "With all key players in the economic and social sector performing well, this is certainly an achievable target. After all, why should India not be a developed country for so long." But, he said at the end of the day it is a political statement, recalling that the political executive had created a catchy slogan like 'garibi hatao' in the 1970s. "I have doubts whether the judiciary, though an organ of the State, but separate and distinct from other organs, should join this bandwagon. Without meaning any disrespect, the appropriate target for the judiciary should be the year 2050. By then, both our Constitution and SC would have completed 100 years, which is a significant milestone to look back and take stock of how we have travelled this far and what is the roadmap ahead," he said.

Referring to the Aug 1986 SC judgment in the Bijoe Emmanuel case in which the court had ruled in favour of children from Jehovah's Witnesses sect refusing to sing the national anthem in school, Justice Bhuyan said only a courageous judge like O Chinnappa Reddy could have penned such a judgment. He said tolerance, which is taught by our tradition and Constitution, must be practiced.

1 dead, 16 hurt as 2 ropeway trolleys crash

Raipur: A woman died and 16 people were injured after two ropeway trolleys crashed at Khallari Mata temple in Mahasamund district of Chhattisgarh on Sunday.

The accident occurred around 10am during the Chaitra Navratri festival when the trolleys were descending from the hilltop shrine. Mahasamund SP Prabhat Kumar said a total of 13 people were onboard the trolley buckets when the mechanism failed. The deceased was identified as Aayushi Sahas (28), a resident of Raipur. She was in a trolley carrying five devotees, which fell 30-40 feet. TNN

Ulfa militants strike police camp, 4 personnel injured

Dibrugarh: Four police commandos were wounded after anti-talks militant faction Ulfa-I launched a pre-dawn assault with rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) and automatic weapons on a camp at 10th Mile in Upper Assam's Tinsukia district Sunday, raising concerns over insurgent activity before the April 9 elections.

The attack began around 2am in Jagun, over 550km east of Guwahati, when Ulfa-I militants fired at least five RPGs in quick succession, triggering multiple blasts that lit up the area. Gunfire from automatic weapons followed, drawing retaliatory fire from commandos inside. The exchange lasted about 45 minutes before the attackers slipped into nearby areas under cover of darkness.

The wounded commandos — Chittaranjan Mili, Debashish Bora, Rabi Garh and Jimbush Marak — were shifted to Assam Medical College and Hospital in Dibrugarh. Weapons inside the camp were also reported damaged in explosions.

Investigators found two spent RPG shells and one unexploded shell at the site. Security has been intensified along Assam–Arunachal Pradesh border, roughly 12km away, amid fears militants may attempt to cross over. TNN

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CLOSE WATCH

The Perseverance rover has found tiny crystals believed to be rubies or sapphire inside pebbles on Mars's surface. New Scientist reports these gem grains are made of a substance called corundum.

SCIENCE OF THE TIMES

QUICK QUIZ

Religious legend has it that St Patrick drove all the snakes out of this country. Now scientists have attributed the absence of the reptiles to the ice age that ended 11,700 years ago. Which country is this?

TIPPING POINT: HOW EARTH MAY GO INTO A HOT LOOP

New Research Shows If Changes To The Greenland Ice Sheet, Amazon Forest Or Atlantic Currents Breach Thresholds, The Planet May Enter A 'Hothouse Trajectory' Of No Return

Chethan.Kumar@timesofindia.com

We know the planet has been warming for decades. Now, a group of scientists wants us to understand something more unsettling: higher temperatures can further trigger the process of warming, leading to a chain of events that, once started, we may not be able to stop.

For thousands of years, human civilization has lived in a relative climate calm. Seasons shifted, monsoons came and went, glaciers grew and shrank slowly. Agriculture flourished. Cities rose. That stability, scientists now say, is slipping.

"We are leaving the stable conditions of the Holocene," authors of a new study published in One Earth write, referring to the last 11,700 years during which human societies developed. The paper's lead authors include climate scientist William J Ripple and Earth system researcher Johan Rockstrom.

Researchers from institutions including Oregon State University and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research lay out what they call the risk of a "hothouse Earth trajectory" — a pathway in which the climate system tips past a point of no return, locking the planet into temperatures far higher than anything seen in human history, even if we stop burning fossil fuels tomorrow.

How warming feeds itself

Think of the climate as a thermostat that can, under certain conditions, start turning itself up. When Arctic ice melts, for instance, the white surface that once reflected sunlight back into space is replaced by dark ocean water, which absorbs heat instead. More heat melts more ice, and a more ice-free ocean absorbs more heat. And warming accelerates without help from humans.

Scientists call these "amplifying feedback loops", and they have identified dozens of them — from thawing permafrost releasing stored carbon, to dying forests that can no longer absorb carbon dioxide, to changes in cloud cover that let more solar energy through. Each loop is a mechanism by which warming begets more warming.

What makes the new paper striking is how it joins these individual loops to a wider theory of catastrophic, self-sustaining change.

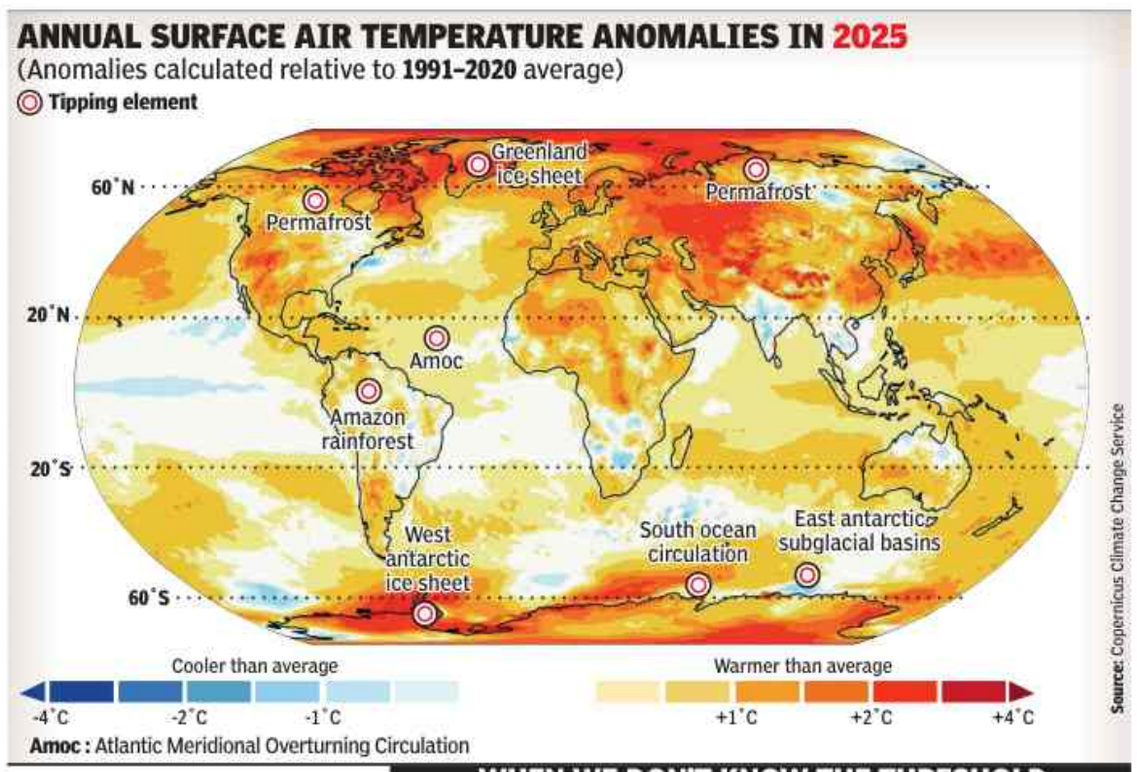
Tipping Elements

Scattered across the planet are what scientists call "tipping elements" — large parts of the Earth system that can, when pushed past a certain temperature threshold, shift abruptly and permanently into a new state.

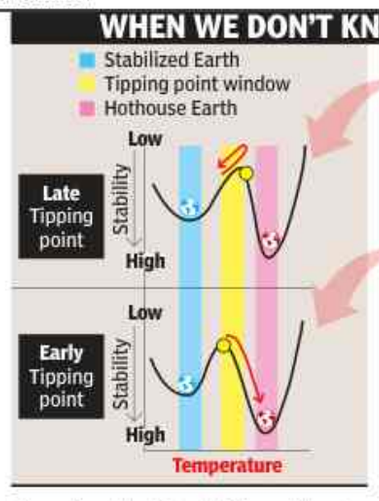
Sixteen such elements have been identified. The Greenland Ice Sheet is one. The Amazon rainforest is another. The Atlantic Ocean's great overturning current — the conveyor belt of water that keeps northern Europe relatively mild — is the third. The concern is not that each of these will tip independently; it is that they are connected. Trigger one, and it may push others closer to their own thresholds.

The paper describes a chain of events that illustrates the point. Rising greenhouse gas emissions warm the Arctic, melting sea ice and the Greenland Ice Sheet. The meltwater pours into the Atlantic and disrupts ocean currents that alters rainfall patterns across the tropics. Parts of the Amazon dry out. Dying trees release carbon that warms the planet further. And the cycle continues.

"Such tipping cascades have the potential to drive self-sustaining climate change," the authors write.



WHEN WE DON'T KNOW THE THRESHOLD



- **If tipping point comes at a higher temperature** (top graph), **we have a chance to pull back and return to a cooler,** stable Earth
- **If the tipping point comes at a lower temperature** (bottom graph), **even a modest future warming could send Earth onto a runaway to 'hothouse'**

1.5° Line, Already Crossed

The Paris Agreement of 2015 set a target of limiting warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. That limit was crossed for twelve consecutive months in 2024. The authors note that climate model simulations suggest this may already reflect the long-term average, not just a temporary spike.

The rate of warming has also accelerated. In the mid-twentieth century, the planet was warming at roughly 0.05° per decade. The current rate is approximately 0.31° per decade — six times faster.

At that pace, the paper suggests, we could cross 2° of warming before the middle of this century. There is a complicating factor. For decades, industrial air pollution — the aerosols produced by burning coal and oil — has had a cooling effect, masking some of the warming caused by greenhouse gases.

As the world shifts away from the dirtiest fuels, that masking effect fades. The result could be an additional 0.5° of warming.

ALARM BELLS

- Since 1970s, global mean surface **temperature has risen at a decadal average of 0.2°C, the fastest in the past decade**
- In 2024, **global temperature exceeded 1.5°C above pre-industrial age**
- **2025 was the third-warmest year on record**

What We Don't Know

The paper is careful not to claim certainty. The precise temperature at which each tipping element flips is unknown. Some may be further away than feared; others may be closer than some current models suggest.

The Greenland Ice Sheet, one study cited here indicates, may be vulnerable to tipping at somewhere between 0.8° and 3.4° of warming. Uncertainty, the authors say, is not a reason to wait. If anything, it is the opposite. "Uncertainty about where tipping thresholds lie is therefore not a reason for delay, but a compelling reason for immediate precautionary action," they say.

Where We're Headed

Current national pledges and policies, assessed by the UN Environment Programme, put the planet on track for peak warming of roughly 2.8° by 2100. In 2024, global energy-related CO^2 emissions rose to a record 37.8 billion tonnes, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Atmospheric CO^2 has reached 422.5 parts per million, about 50% higher than the pre-industrial age. Scientists stop short of predicting a hothouse outcome. What they are doing is insisting the risk be taken seriously by those who set policy. There is, they note, an important distinction between a "hothouse trajectory" and a "hothouse state". A trajectory is a direction of travel that can still, in theory, be interrupted. A state — a planet of extreme, sustained heat and seas many metres higher — is where that trajectory ends.

Is this why aliens haven't reached us?

We may have been missing signals from intelligent aliens because of solar winds. Researchers from the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) Institute say this means we have been watching for the wrong type of signal, potentially failing to spot promising evidence of extraterrestrial life, but the chances of a future discovery are now higher. The not-for-profit organisation carries out research to help prove the existence of alien life, which includes listening for extraterrestrial radio signals that cannot be explained by natural cosmological phenomena.

Such a signal was previously expected to be a sharp, distinct radio signal in a narrow frequency range. But the new research suggests that any such signal sent from a distant planet may end up being made fainter and wider in the frequency band – essentially blurred slightly – as they pass through the plasma winds of stars.

Vishal Gajjar and Grayce Brown at the SETI Institute calculated the scale of the effect on radio transmissions from spacecraft in our solar system, then extrapolated that to other stellar environments. They found that a 100-megahertz signal could be widened as much as 100 hertz – enough to "fall below traditional detection thresholds" (The Astrophysical Journal). A space weather event can similarly increase the amount of broadening experienced by a signal by several orders of magnitude.

John Elliott at the University of St Andrews, UK, says he sees the news as the glass being half-full, not half-empty: it means previous searches may have missed evidence, but also means that future searches will be more likely to succeed.

"It's over 50 years that we've been actively researching and that's a blink of the eye, isn't it, when you think about it," says Elliott.

(Matthew Sparkes, New Scientist, distributed by Tribune Content Agency)

LAST WEEK'S QUICK QUIZ **Question on March 17:** Which country first eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV? **Answer:** Cuba

TIMES NATION

Newness Of New Generation

CITY CITY BANG BANG

SANTOSH DESAI

In a recent research study that I was involved in, we examined the content consumption of the coming generation, which has been labelled Gen Alpha, and found something interesting. This is a generation being brought up, above all, by content. And behind it, the algorithm.

The strongest influence being exerted on these young minds comes from the digital habitat they grow up in. The algorithm decides what their formative experiences should be. Parental presence and involvement exist, but parents are at a loss when it comes to figuring out exactly what role they need to play in mediating between their child and the digital world. They know that familiarity with, and even mastery over, this world will be a necessary precondition for life in the future. But they are also aware that they do not really know what kind of exposure their child is getting.

Parents grew up in a generation where their primary habitat was the physical world outside. Learning happened through contact and friction. The scraping of the knee while playing football, the smell of impending rain, the sound of feet trudging up a staircase. Distance was something the body measured through tiredness. Time was what it took for milk to go off, for the light to change from afternoon to evening. Space, time, and your place in both were taught to you by a world that followed rules it did not explain and did not adjust on your behalf. The monsoon was not curated for engagement.

There are many differences between the two modes of influence. For one thing, content never operates out of indifference. Nature, by contrast, simply exists, and that is all there is to it. The outside world is supremely disinterested in what we want, whether it is a hailstorm or a traffic jam. Your reaction is of no consequence. You are nobody. Encountering this indifference to our needs shapes us in a foundational way. We learn that making our way in the world requires many different capacities to come together. Patience, tact, force, charm, knowledge and acceptance all have to work together for things to work.

This is far from true when it comes to content. It is always aimed at someone. It is designed to elicit a reaction. In this world, nothing merely is. If it exists, it is for a reason, and more often than not, that reason involves pleasing us.

Even the concept of space changes. In the physical world, proximity is a measure of significance. What is nearer usually affects us more than what is further away. For content, physical distance is irrelevant. Neighbourhood becomes a matter of shared preference, which in turn is algorithmically driven.

The content-native self is formed by 10,000 micro-influences, none of which registers as an influence. A reel here, a tone absorbed from a creator watched for 11 seconds, an aesthetic preference acquired without a single recognisable moment of acquisition. One becomes oneself without any clear sense of how

The concept and experience of time also alter significantly. In the physical world, time was how we experienced context. The interminable wait in a doctor's waiting room, the less-than-thrilling drone of a classroom lecture, the minutes ticking by in a traffic jam. We did not consume time. We were embedded in it. And it moved as if it had a mind of its own.

Technology began the manipulation of time well before the smartphone. The ability to rewind a cassette, skip to a favourite song, and pause a television programme. Each was a small lesson in the idea that time is something amenable to moulding, something on which we can impose our desires. And yet the structure of time stayed intact. A song had a beginning, a middle and an end.

What the feed does is dissolve the structure itself. Time is broken up and served back to us on the basis of what the algorithm believes we would like. A post from a day ago sits next to one posted five minutes back. The iron grip of chronology has been loosened. Time has become a form of ambient content, something that is on rather than something you are in. And within this ambient wash, we experience time seesawing between a sense of control and one of passive acceptance as we let the feed wash over us.

How does the self form in such an environment? Earlier, growing up was a collage of discrete experiences and memories. A book one read, a film one saw thrice, a lesson learnt from a failure discrete enough to be remembered and weighty enough to be narrated. You could tell the story of how you became who you are because each constituent influence was individually significant.

The content-native self is formed by 10,000 micro-influences, none of which registers as an influence. One grows up in a blur, with the past having a shape but lacking a sense of the substance that fills it. A reel here, a tone absorbed from a creator watched for 11 seconds, an aesthetic preference acquired without a single recognisable moment of acquisition. One becomes oneself without any clear sense of how. One arrives without a sense of having travelled.

Memory becomes more orientation than anchor. It slants us towards certain preferences, predisposes us to certain choices, without it being clear what exactly shaped us. We sense what is familiar and what is not, but struggle to pinpoint how we know that. And when memory loses its anchoring function, aspiration changes too.

This kind of self may have a fluidity and a comfort with change that earlier generations did not. It may well be better suited to the world technology is creating for us. But what is important to recognise is that this is not a linear change in the making. The next generation is growing up in a fundamentally new way.

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Shah: Modi has served for 24 yrs without a day's leave

▶ Continued from page 1

Modi — who was the longest-serving Gujarat CM — is also the only PM apart from Jawaharlal Nehru to notch up three successive stints after leading his alliance to victory in as many Lok Sabha polls.

Shah called it a milestone rooted in service, hardwork and unwavering commitment. It reflects a deep dedication to nation-first governance, integrity in action and tireless service to every citizen, he said. "Modi ji's decades of seva have shaped an era of his own. Whether it is giving the poor their rights, setting new landmarks in development or enhancing the nation's pride on global platforms, the Modi era has transformed India unrecognisably," he said.

He added that serving the nation without taking a holiday for more than 24 years is the manifestation of his sheer commitment. "This explains the unprecedented affection he received from people, three times as Gujarat CM and three times as India's PM. People's trust, affection and support for him have only grown with every passing day," he said.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh said pure devotion to the nation and its people defines Modi. "From his unwavering commitment as CM of Gujarat to his dedicated leadership as the Prime Minister, his life has been a continuous journey of service," he said.

TDP neta and Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu called it an extraordinary achievement that reflects Modi's dedication, visionary leadership and tireless commitment to the progress and prosperity of country.

EPFO reaches out to subscribers to withdraw unclaimed balance

Shiva.Rajora@timesofindia.com

The facility will help deal with nearly 8 lakh Aadhar verified inoperative accounts, with Rs 5,200 crore, of which nearly 14,000 such accounts have more than Rs 5 lakh lying unclaimed

New Delhi: The Employees Provident Fund Organisation is focusing on getting subscribers to withdraw unclaimed money lying in inoperative accounts.

Nearly a quarter of the inoperative accounts, which are Aadhar verified, may soon get cleared of the idle balances as EPFO is working to develop an auto-settlement facility, which will allow the account holders to receive the unclaimed money in their bank accounts without filing for claims, an official told ToI.

The facility is slated to help deal with nearly 8.1 lakh Aadhar verified inoperative accounts, amounting up to Rs 5,200 crore, of which nearly 14,000 such accounts have more than Rs 5 lakh lying unclaimed. Another 38,000 Aadhar-verified inoperative accounts have Rs 1-5 lakh lying unclaimed, and 41,000 accounts have between Rs 50,000 and Rs 1 lakh. "In the last meeting, the central board of trustees (CBT) cleared auto-settlement of such inoperative accounts, with an unclaimed balance of Rs 1,000 or less, to their registered bank accounts. Based on the learnings from this project, a separate initiative is planned to design a strategy for other accounts. Members who joined after Oct 2017 will be given priority," the official said.

An inoperative account in EPFO is one that has stopped earning interest and mainly belongs to members who have retired after 55 years of age and no contribution is made for three years. However, for those under 55 years, the account will keep earning interest until the subscriber turns 58.

As of Feb 2026, there were 31.8 lakh inoperative accounts, with Rs 10,181 crore lying unclaimed. Of them, nearly 7 lakh inoperative accounts are older than 20 years, while 1.8 lakh accounts are between 10-20 years old. Nearly 13 lakh inoperative accounts are between 5-10 years old. "Going forward, the idea is to not let an account turn inoperative in the first place. Our focus is on increasing awareness among the members by reaching out to them and letting them withdraw the amount as soon as possible. Further, a majority of the accounts that will turn inoperative in the coming days may be Aadhar-linked, hence we will settle them on our own," the official added.

Kuki leaders talk to Manipur CM for 1st time since unrest started in state

Donald Sairem & MK Henry | TNN

Imphal/Churachandpur: A tentative outreach between the Manipur govt and the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) functionaries in Guwahati marked the first direct engagement in nearly three years, with CM **Yumnam Khemchand Singh** pitching it as groundwork for restoring peace in a state scarred by ethnic violence — though no decisions or agreements emerged from the meeting.

The faultlines showed Sunday as youths stormed KZC chairperson Henlienthang Thanglet's house in Churachandpur, hurling stones and trying to breach the compound over the council's decision to join Saturday's talks, forcing security personnel to fire tear gas to disperse the crowd.

Protesters regrouped after a brief lull, striking lamp posts and triggering panic across the town. Reinforcements were rushed.

"Why should we talk with Manipur govt when we have not achieved any political solution? Our demand for a separate administration should be considered first," a protester said. Khemchand

and KZC functionaries held closed-door talks in a Guwahati hotel, the first such meeting since violence between Meitei community of Imphal valley and Kuki-Zo tribes in the surrounding hills erupted on May 3, 2023. More than 260 people have been killed and over 60,000 displaced since.

Khemchand — first Indian awarded a 5th Dan black belt in traditional South Korean taekwondo and BJP MLA for Singjamei in Imphal West district — took charge after nearly a year of President's rule in the state in Feb. He described KZC's willingness to attend as a "positive beginning", saying no demands were raised and no commitments made. He framed the outreach as a step toward rebuilding trust and expressed hope for further rounds, including a possible meeting in Imphal. KZC functionaries were unwilling to travel to Imphal, prompting the choice of Guwahati as venue.

Since the violence, Meiteis seldom risk venturing into the hills, Kukis rarely descend into the valley. Buffer zones, patrolled and dotted with police outposts, stretch across Imphal West, Kangpokpi, Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts.

2 more rape cases against Nashik astrologer, Fadnavis vows justice

Nashik\Nagpur: Two more rape FIRs have been filed against arrested Nashik astrologer Ashok Kharat, taking the number of such cases to three. The latest allegations came as Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis vowed, on Sunday, that no one would be spared and decried the opposition's attempts to give the matter a political colour.

Of the two fresh cases filed on Saturday, one relates to a complaint by a former employee of Kharat that he assaulted his seven-month pregnant wife between Nov 2023 and Dec 2025 on the pretext of performing spiritual rituals.

The other complaint is by another woman who alleged that Kharat raped her repeatedly between Feb 2020 and March this year after she went through divorce, sedating and getting an abortion done, the police said. Kharat was arrested on March 17 in the first of the three cases.

Speaking in Nagpur, Fadnavis cited the fresh cases to say more women are now coming forward with complaints after investigators reassured them and their families. TNN

THE CURTAIN FALLS, BUT THE STORY LIVES ON

A self-contained universe pauses to take a bow as the curtain comes down on Meera Jain's Tesseract: The Geometry of Truth. One stage, one company, countless moving parts, and a moment where imagination, scale, and emotion stand united in applause. It began as an idea, turned into a performance, unfolded as an experience and will live on as an unforgettable memory for everyone who witnessed it

SIR suspense to end for 27.2L today; second list next Friday

Kaushik Pradhan, Sarthak Ganguly, Srishti Lakhotia | TNN

Kolkata: The wait to know whether they are eligible to vote or not is set to end on Monday for 27.2 lakh people — out of around 60 lakh voters whose names were under adjudication on the final electoral roll — in West Bengal after the Election Commission publishes the first supplementary voters' list.

The second list will be released next Friday and the third on April 3. Around 8.6% of 7 crore people — close to 60 lakh — whose names are on the state's final voters' list, published on Feb 28, are unsure whether they can participate in the forthcoming assembly polls as the Special Intensive Revision of the electoral roll placed them in the "under adjudication" category. Their fate as electors hinges on the scrutiny of their documents by judicial officers.

Seven hundred and five judicial officers disposed of 27.2 lakh cases till last Friday and the first supplementary list will be published on Monday. Those who have lost their voting right will have their names marked on the list, an EC official said. They can appeal before judicial tribunals.

Sources said the supplementary list will be displayed at polling stations before being published online on the ECI and Bengal CEO's portals, as well as the ECINET app.

Sikha Das, a resident of the Bhowanipore assembly constituency, where 14,154 people are under adjudication, is among those awaiting Monday's list for a "reality check" on whether they are considered as "genuine voters". Das's husband and sons have made it to the final roll, but her electoral right was put on hold. Having voted in Bhowanipore since the 1980s, she is hopeful that her name would figure on the supplementary list.

Sourav Chakraborty, Alipore resident, said: "I have all the documents that a genuine voter should possess. I believe the supplementary list will restore my voting right."

Many of those who are on tenterhooks are relying on their booth-level officers (BLOs) to update them on the list.

Akramul Haque Sardar, Canning resident, said: "I have requested my BLO to check and inform me if my name has passed the adjudication hurdle. I am spending anxious moments and praying that my name is on the list. I have been waiting since last Friday, when the list was supposed to come out."

19 appellate tribunals to also hear Form 7 appeals for exclusion of names in Bengal

Kolkata: The EC-notified appellate tribunals in Bengal, for which 19 former HC judges have been selected, will hear appeals against orders passed by judicial officers, not only on inclusion but also exclusion of voters, **reports Debashis Konar**.

An official said while the appellate tribunals will hear appeals against voter-list exclusions, the SIR can also become a route through which certain voters are effectively excluded from the roll. If voters' claims are rejected after adjudication, they can move the tribunals. Tribunals will not just rectify exclusions but also adjudicate entitlement to be on the list.

DMK, Congress yet to reach Pondy seat deal

Chennai: Deadlock between DMK and Congress over Puducherry seat-sharing persisted Sunday, clouding prospects of a smooth alliance as negotiations dragged on without resolution.

Talks in Chennai brought together TN chief minister MK Stalin, DMK functionary Jagathratchagan, and Congress functionary P Chidambaram, but produced no breakthrough, with disagreements centred on constituencies claimed by both sides. Contention has narrowed around Nellithope, Raj Bhavan, Muthialpet, Kalapet and Mannadipet seats. TNN

Morally couldn't vote for Cong-backed candidate: Defiant BJD rebel MLAs

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Bhubaneswar: A day after BJD suspended six MLAs for cross-voting in favour of BJP-backed independent candidate Dilip Ray in the recent Rajya Sabha election, the rebel legislators defended their action, insisting they had done nothing wrong.

The development has deepened cracks within the party, with several suspended MLAs and their supporters openly criticising BJD president Naveen Patnaik's leadership and his decision to align with Congress and back Datteswar Hota, who lost to Ray.

RS POLLS

"I have no regrets. I abided by the party's order and gave my first preference vote to BJD candidate Santrupt Misra. But my conscience did not allow me to support common candidate Hota, who was backed by Congress. Congress is our rival — how could I vote for their candidate?" asked Subasini Jena, the suspended MLA from Basta, whose husband, former BJD MP Rabindra Jena, joined BJP days before the polls.

Amid growing dissent in the party, Banki MLA Devi Ranjan Tripathy also rejected the BJD-Congress alliance. His supporters staged a rally in Cuttack, chanting slogans against Naveen's close aide and former BJD strategist V K Pandian. "Pandian claimed he quit politics after BJD's 2024 debacle, but he still calls the shots. He ruined the party," alleged one. Baliguda MLA Chakramani Kanhar also challenged the suspension. "I voted for our official candidate, Misra, as first preference, but gave my conscience vote to Dilip Ray. The party whip does not apply to Rajya Sabha elections," Kanhar argued.

Choudwar-Cuttack MLA Souvic Biswal said he would have preferred expulsion over suspension.

Expelled Cong MLA who joined Raijor Dal gets TMC ticket

Guwahati: Opposition ranks in Assam saw fresh churn Sunday after Sherman Ali Ahmed, widely seen as Congress ally Raijor Dal's near-finalised pick for Mandia in Barpeta district, surfaced as a Trinamool Congress candidate even before formally quitting the party, **reports Kangkan Kalita**.

About two hours earlier, Raijor Dal unveiled a final list of 12 nominees for the April 9 assembly polls — dropping Sherman, a former AIUDF and sitting Congress MLA who has been openly critical of Assam Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi. Congress had named former Barpeta MP Abdul Khaleque for Mandia, a Muslim-majority seat in Lower Assam.

Congress–Raijor Dal seat-sharing was sealed Thursday night. On Sunday morning, Raijor Dal issued a revised slate of 12, excluding Sherman. In a rare move to tighten coordination against BJP-led alliance, the party withdrew three candidates — ceding those seats to Congress.

Sherman was first elected from Baghbar in 2011 as an AIUDF candidate, then switched to Congress and won again in 2016 and 2021. He was suspended by Congress in Oct 2021 for repeatedly violating party discipline, and joined Raijor Dal in Feb this year.

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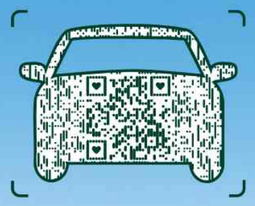

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I find in many things more restraint and order in my morals than in my opinions, and my lust less depraved than my reason

– MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

Just Collateral Damage

Ordinary people are targets of war everywhere, even though international laws forbade it 50 years ago

If Earth formed 24 hours ago, humans have been around for just 1 second. And in that second, the time we've been good to each other is so short, you'd need to measure it with an atomic clock. Ancient Romans thought nothing of burning down enemy cities and slaughtering whole populations. At Carthage, in 146 BCE, they killed "hundreds of thousands" over two days, and sold 50,000 survivors into slavery. Civilians – women, children, artisans, traders – were fair game as late as WW2, when Nazis blitzed London night after night. And don't forget, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were horrors inflicted entirely on civilians.

For a while, it seemed WW2 had jolted our collective conscience. Geneva Conventions of 1949 laid down dos and don'ts for treatment of PoWs – some 3.5mn Soviet PoWs had died in German captivity – and civilians in occupied territories. Thirty years later, rules were written to protect civilians in active warzones. But after four years of war in Ukraine, and now the fourth week in Iran, it's clear that these rules are observed only in the breach. Civilians in Kyiv, Mariupol, Tehran, Tel Aviv, are no more safe in enemy hands than Carthaginians all those centuries ago.

In Ukraine, residential blocks are attacked with drones and missiles regularly. Russia allegedly took away 20,000 Ukrainian children. It has knocked out Ukrainian power infra every winter, to make non-combatants suffer. In Gaza, 2mn people – 90% of population – are displaced or homeless. Did they have a hand in the Oct 2023 Hamas attack in Israel? No, but they are "collateral damage". So are a million Lebanese. Everywhere, in every war, civilians bear the brunt. Trump and Bibi's "excursion" in Iran started with a "mistaken" missile strike on a girl's school. Since then, Iran has picked soft targets across West Asia, in Dubai, Qatar, Iraq, Saudi Arabia. In our immediate neighbourhood, the open war between Pakistan and Afghanistan has killed hundreds of civilians, including patients at a Kabul hospital.

Should WW3 break out – it seemed possible when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022 – what are the odds it would spare civilians? On current evidence, international humanitarian laws exist only on paper, and countries that pushed them once – US, and Russia as part of USSR – show a cynical disregard for them now. But this absence of restraint in war should bother countries that are watching from the sidelines. India, China, Japan, all of Europe, S Africa, Canada, Brazil, should speak up. All is not fair in war. Not anymore.

Fund The Charge

Now is the time for automakers to step up and lead the setting up of EV-charging infra

It's anyone's guess how long the US-Israel-Iran war will continue. What's clear is that, there's no better time to step on the gas, read electric, to push for a swift and seamless transition to electrification of transport. EVs' contribution, to ensuring energy security, cannot be overstated. Great idea, right? But, as a Tesla motorist discovered on a trip from Delhi to Jaipur and back, the road – to a stress-free EV cruise – is very bumpy. As the motorist discovered, what the app showed, differed from ground reality; charging stations were few & far between; charging points were out-of-order.

With that as an on-road experience, it's no wonder EV penetration was barely less than 8%, fiscal 2025. That's not encouraging for GOI's goal of 30% annual vehicle sales to be electric, by 2030, just four years away. One think tank pegged the actual numbers – to keep 50mn EVs moving, India would need 1.3mn charging stations by 2030. Per a Niti report, over ₹40k cr were spent by way of incentives, over the last 10 years, to reach 7.6% penetration. And it's obvious the problem with *selling* EVs, still, is the hassle of *running* EVs.

Niti argues 'gentle' mandates, and disincentives, will push the EV transition. Globally, laying out the EV charging infra has been led by consortiums of auto-companies. It happened in US, Europe, South Korea, Japan. India has around 20 charging point operators, but they can neither build the infra, nor maintain it at the scale required for a meaningful transition – limited cash flow, unsure returns, and fragmented regulatory landscape are all speed-breakers. In India, too, the mandate/disincentive should be for GOI to tell Indian automakers to stop whining for more incentives, and instead, get their skin in the game – and partner with govts to build the charging infra.

Labour pains

Thanks to AI, we may have too much leisure

Jug Suraiya

Workers of the world, relax, you have nothing to lose but your chores. The AI apocalypse looming over the world gives the Marxist rallying call a new twist.

According to Vinod Khosla, an Indian-American leading light in the realm of AI, four years from now 80% of today's workers, in fields from agriculture to science labs, will be made redundant by AI, and by 2040 no child who is five years old today will ever have to work for a living.

So what will all these workless people live on, apart from love and fresh air, assuming that climate change doesn't make the latter a figment of fantasy? No worries, says Khosla. AI will have a deflationary effect on the economy, bringing down the price of everything from food to housing, education to consumer goods, so that something that costs ₹1,000 today will cost ₹100 only, 24 years from now.

The money saved by getting wage-free AI to do all the work will go into a special fund that will provide a lifetime of unearned income, free of tax, to all citizens.

Released from the daily grind of earning a living, people will be free to "pursue their dream and follow their passion", enthuses the AI cheerleader. Utopia has never been so utopian.

jugular*vein*

But the trouble with pursuing one's dream is that when you catch up with it the dream might turn out to be a nightmare. And following your passion as a lifelong vocation can be an exhausting business, because unlike a 9-to-5, 5-days-a-week job, passion will demand to be followed 24/7, 365 days of the year, 366 in leap years.

It's like saying about needing a holiday after coming back from a holiday because being on holiday, with all the rushing about sightseeing and engaging in other frenetic activities that holidays entail, leaves you totally knackered.

Faced with the unendingly wearisome worklessness of dream pursuing and passion following, future generations might elect to be put into suspended animation and outsource all that dream pursuing and passion following to bots.

A solution that advocates like Khosla might endorse with a resoundingly affirmative "AI, AI, sir!"

If Trump Puts Troops In Iran...

His best options are, capturing oil export infra like Kharg Island, and seizing Iran's coastline to control Strait of Hormuz. Both come with considerable risks, as Iran has long prepared for these scenarios. Besides, there isn't much global support for Trump's moves

Abhishek Kadiyala

After US bombed Kharg Island, which handles 90% of Iranian oil exports, and dispatched marines and amphibious assault ships, such as USS Tripoli, to the region, talk of a US ground offensive has increased. But how might such an offensive unfold?

Trump's approach suggests US would aim for control of Persian Gulf coastline, not conquest. It would leverage Iran's energy infra, and influence over Strait of Hormuz, to force political concessions rather than pursue regime change.

Point of attack | Mountains in Iran's north and west act as natural barriers, making a land offensive prohibitively costly and slow. A western approach over Zagros range is also ruled out, now that US outreach to Iranian Kurdish groups has seemingly stalled, following their demands of political guarantees.

An eastern land approach through Pakistan is equally implausible, given strong opposition to US and Israel in Pakistan, especially after Khamenei's killing. And the ongoing Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict complicates this option. So, a ground offensive aimed at Iran's Persian Gulf coastline, with the objective of capturing its oil reserves and limiting its influence over Strait of Hormuz, might be more practical.

Source: US Military

Night flight operations underway on USS Tripoli

Mode of attack | The offensive could involve an amphibious assault to occupy oil-rich island territories, such as Kharg, the strategically important Qeshm Island, or disputed islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa. Although this requires fewer troops, the operational risk is greater. A ground offensive through the southwestern province of Khuzestan, involving a larger coalition and significant troop commitment, is another possibility.

An amphibious assault would most likely target Kharg, as US strikes have considerably destroyed Iranian military assets there. The reported deployment of over 5,000 marines to West Asia increases the likelihood of this option.

In a ground offensive through Khuzestan, US forces would enter from Iraq or Kuwait. Flat terrain and marshes here would favour an advance, supported by overwhelming air superiority. The first phase would target Ahvaz, which has Iran's largest oil field. Khuzestan also has other major fields like Gachsaran, Marun, Bibi Hakimeh, Agha Jari, and Karanj, making it a critical energy hub. And given the presence of several Iranian nuclear sites in the region, seizing them could also be a key mission objective.

After capturing key oil infra, the campaign may aim to weaken Iran's access to the Gulf, while strengthening coalition supply lines, by advancing along the coastline, towards Bushehr and Bandar Abbas. Capturing major ports, such as Imam Khomeini and Bandar Abbas, would weaken Iran's military and economic position, along with its leverage over energy flows and maritime access.

Success of this plan would give US a strategic choice between halting and declaring victory – the safer option – or pushing inland, with support from local militias and anti-regime groups.

Why action seems unavoidable | Iran's new leadership has reportedly rejected Trump's proposals to renew negotiations. So, US is likely seeking a strong bargaining chip to bring Iran back to the negotiating table. Capturing critical and sensitive territory could provide this leverage, and act as an off-ramp.

Secondly, Iranian missile and drone strikes targeting US partners in West Asia, have strained confidence in US security guarantees. A decisive ground campaign that weakens Iran, while securing Strait of Hormuz, could reestablish US as a credible security guarantor in the region.

Internationally, securing Strait of Hormuz would reaffirm America's role as the protector of Sea Lines of Communication, and deter rivals like China and Russia.

It won't be easy | Zagros Mountains are not only a physical barrier but also host artillery, drone and missile systems, which are difficult to neutralise. So, they can upend US assault plans. US forces on captured islands would face sustained bombardment from these positions, while their supply lines would remain exposed to Iranian attacks.

Even in a coastal invasion, the hilly stretch between Bushehr and Bandar Abbas, could slow the advance and lead to a prolonged war of attrition.

Iran's domestic dynamics increase the uncertainty. Saddam Hussein's 1980 invasion of Khuzestan assumed Arab populations would side with Iraq, but Iranian national identity proved stronger than ethnic ties. A US-led offensive could provoke a similar response.

Unlike 1980s, when Iran experienced renewed national pride, it has now endured decades of sanctions, internal repression, and sustained bombardment. These pressures may have weakened public resilience, but could also intensify resistance to an invasion.

Internationally, a swift campaign that opens Strait of Hormuz, may initially attract support. But once this is achieved, US may find itself alone as regards the additional objectives of capturing Iran's oil reserves, and nuclear stockpile. America's West Asian partners like Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar don't want to be seen as having a hand in coalition operations, especially after Iran has demonstrated willingness to attack them.

Above all, Iran is likely to have prepared extensively for defending its southwestern region. Mass mobilisation, entrenched military structures, and volunteer forces could slow any advance. While Iran may struggle to sustain a long war, due to economic constraints, Trump is also testing the limits of domestic political support for an extended conflict.

The writer is a research analyst at Takshashila Institution's Indo-Pacific programme, with a focus on US, and US-India relations

Cong Gotta Beat BJP To Even Be King Of Oppn

Party's poll results in Kerala and Assam will decide its place in opposition – is it first among equals, or not? Until that wrangle is settled, opposition INDIA bloc will remain listless

Asim Ali

Elections in Assam, TN, Kerala and WB might, finally, help resolve national opposition's core dilemma. Will INDIA bloc evolve into a jointly led 'coalition of equals', or into a Congress-led front, as 'first among equals'? Until this is resolved, opposition will likely remain in limbo, or "on life support", as J&K CM Omar Abdullah put it.

If Congress wins Kerala and Assam, where it's the main challenger, it would revive its claim to primacy. Defeats for Congress, and victories for TMC and DMK, in WB and TN, respectively, would reset equations among national opposition, towards parity.

After Congress's resurgence in 2024 LS elections – it won 99 of INDIA bloc's 234 seats – Congress's pretensions to opposition leadership have taken a battering. It fared poorly against BJP in Haryana, Maharashtra, Delhi and Bihar. The only states where INDIA constituents defeated BJP were fronted by regional outfits, Congress as junior partner – JMM in Jharkhand, NC in J&K. A TMC victory against BJP in Bengal would only add more weight to this trend.

Both Congress and state parties understand the stakes involved, which explains the pitched battles between them, last few months. In its bid for revival, Congress is fighting four distinct battles this election cycle.

POLLS 2026
Bengal, TN, Assam, Kerala

First, in TN, Congress has been trying to break out of its mould as a junior coalition partner to DMK, confined to a few pockets. Much like in Bihar with RJD, Congress spent the lead-up to the campaign in sharpening its own identity, by distancing itself from DMK. This included overtures made by state Congress leaders to actor Vijay's TVK, and corruption allegations by veterans like Manickam Tagore against DMK, until now, their most loyal ally.

The gambit has failed so far. Stalin has steadfastly refused to either significantly increase Congress's seat share, or commit DMK to sharing power, or ministerial portfolios, with the party. Ultimately, Congress high command has accepted this subordinate role, and pulled back from destructive moves like friendly fights that wrecked the alliance in Bihar.

Second, in WB, Congress has hitched its revival plans to political independence, moving out of the Left alliance, alongside which it fought the last two elections. Both Congress and Left Front have seen their fortunes plummet in Bengal. Neither could open its account in the last elections – down from 44, and 32, seats, respectively, in 2016's election.

The tussle between the former partners is effectively for political survival, which means finishing in third place, leaving TMC and BJP to fight for state power. WB will, thus, test the validity of Congress's idea, to regenerate its latent base, by contesting maximum seats possible. The assumption is that only by fighting alone can Congress recharge its dormant organisational cadre statewide, or at least in its former strongholds of north-central Bengal such as Malda, Murshidabad and Nadia districts.

Third, biggest stakes for Congress are in Kerala and Assam, both states where the party has been out of power for a decade, and is, therefore, primed to benefit from anti-incumbency sentiments. Much of the established old guard in both states has faded, passed away or defected. This has opened up space for Congress high command to implement the party's '2022 Udaipur declaration' for younger leadership, drawn from diverse castes/communities. Yet, that vision has been enacted only superficially. Few points:

- It's true Congress state units are fronted in both states by younger faces – VD Satheesan (Kerala) and Gaurav Gogoi (Assam). But overhauling of state party organisations hasn't kept step with these generational shifts. Nor are factional conflicts tamed, that had contributed to Congress's drubbing in the last elections.
- Factionalism has become less institutionalised in Kerala than earlier decades (the classic Congress A of Antony/Chandy vs Congress I of Chennithala), the party still revolves around leadership groups, with KC Venugopal also entering the fray as a pillar of patronage. Meanwhile, Congress's strategy, to confer primary authority, in Assam, to Gaurav Gogoi, and project him as presumptive CM nominee, fuelled squabbles – evident in the high-profile exits of veterans Pradyut Bordoloi and Bhupen Borah.
- Congress high command has also failed to enact inclusive representation at the leadership level, in either state, as was promised in the Udaipur declaration. In Kerala, party leadership continues to skew towards upper-caste Nairs and Christians, while in Assam, it's tilted towards caste-Hindu elites.
- Communalism and corruption aside, Congress hasn't articulated a programmatic agenda, in either state, that can be contrasted with Vijayan's or Himanta's tenures.
- Congress's strengths include return of minorities to its fold. Rakibul Hussain trouncing AIUDF's Ajmal, in LS 2024, indicated a Muslim return to Congress in Assam, a sentiment reinforced by Congress's decision, this time, to not ally with AIUDF. Similarly, Congress appears poised to increase vote share among Muslims and Christians in Kerala.

Finally, Congress high command appears unable to be a force multiplier for its state units, failing to translate pervasive mass concerns of national scope – unemployment and price rise – into electorally salient state issues. Unless the Gandhi-Kharge Congress finds a way to overcome this, it'll struggle to defeat BJP in head-to-head elections, and emerge as 'first among equals' within opposition.

The writer is a political scientist

Calvin & Hobbes

Sacred*space*

A Sannyasin cannot belong to any religion, for his is a life of independent thought, which draws from all religions; his is a life of realisation, not merely of theory or belief, much less of dogma.

Swami Vivekananda

Navratri: Renounce Fried Food, Awaken Shakti Within

Anandmurti Gurumaa

To truly understand the essence of Navratri, one must first understand the nature of existence, which operates on three distinct levels: the gross, subtle, and causal. This triad can be beautifully understood through the simple analogy of an incense stick. The physical stick that you can hold and touch is the gross form. When lit, it produces smoke that is visible but impossible to grasp, representing the subtle form. Eventually, that smoke merges entirely into the vastness of space, leaving behind an invisible but undeniable fragrance – this is the causal state.

Similarly, the Divine Mother, or Bhagavati, exists in these three forms. Her gross form is the physical murti we worship, or her mythological incarnation. Her subtle form is the immense, invisible energy that powers our senses, just as the physical eye is gross, but the power of sight within it is subtle. Ultimately, her causal form is the infinite, formless source of all creation, the golden womb from which the entire cosmos emanates.

Ancient sages understood this profound connection between macrocosm of the universe and microcosm of the human body, which is why Navratri is celebrated during the vital junction of changing seasons. As the cold retreats and summer approaches, our internal digestive fire naturally weakens, making the body vulnerable. To counteract this, fasting is prescribed.

THE SPEAKING TREE

However, modern society has deeply misunderstood this practice. True fasting is not an excuse to substitute regular grains with heavy, fried snacks eaten continuously. Genuine fasting is a conscious withdrawal from food to give the physical system a profound rest. For those who are healthy, a water fast allows the body to enter a state of autophagy, which naturally clears out dead cells and heals internal organs.

This immense willpower to control the senses is perfectly exemplified in the legend of Devi. In her ultimate quest to attain Shiv, her penance was so fierce that she gradually renounced all food.

When she stopped eating fallen leaves to sustain her physical body, she earned the beautiful name Aparna, the one who exists without even a leaf. We are called to emulate a fraction of this supreme dedication during Navratri.

Physical rituals we perform during these nine days are designed to anchor this commitment. Tying a sacred mauli, a thread on the wrist, acts as a constant physical reminder of our vows, gently stopping our hand when we reach for unnecessary food or distractions. Applying a sandalwood tilak on the forehead activates the ajna chakra; as it dries and gently pulls the skin, it naturally draws our scattered attention inward, building an unshakeable focus and awakening our deepest intuition.

When the body is purified through fasting and the mind is anchored through discipline, true spiritual awakening begins. Lighting a ghee lamp in front of the Devi is not simply a ritual to show light to the divine, but a powerful tool to steady the human mind.

By practising *trataka* – unblinking gazing at the flame – alongside the chanting of sacred *stotras*, one can bring the wandering mind to a point of absolute stillness. The ultimate culmination of Navratri is the realisation that Bhagavati is not an external deity; she is the *Satchidananda* – truth, consciousness, and bliss – that breathes through our lungs, sees through our eyes, and beats in our hearts. By mastering our senses, our breath, and our minds, we move from being ordinary humans to realising the absolute, supreme Shakti that resides within us.

TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026

ASIA'S OIL BUFFER IS NOT EQUAL

As tensions threaten energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz, Asia's ability to absorb shocks depends on how long countries can rely on their oil reserves. S&P Global Ratings data shows **a wide gap in buffer capacity across key economies**

Strategic oil reserves
(days of import cover)

Source: Company disclosures, S&P Global Rating

Direction of conflict, foreign investors to influence D-St

Price Of War: Sensex Set For Yet Another Roller Coaster Week

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: As the global markets enter the fourth week of the war in West Asia, in the domestic market oil & gas, banking and auto stocks are expected to be the main focus of Dalal Street investors in the new but truncated trading week. During the first three weeks, as crude oil prices jumped about 50% from the pre-war levels, these were also the sectors that were hammered the most, BSE data showed. Consider this: Between Feb 27, the day before the war between the US-Israel and Iran started, and Mar 20, BSE's PSU banking index has lost nearly 13%, the all banking index almost 12%, the oil & gas index 12.2% and the auto index is down 12.1%.

At the other end of the spectrum, BSE's clean environment index was up 2.6% while the utilities index was up a marginal 0.4% and the power index closed just 0.6% down.

Market players feel in the new week, trading trends by foreign funds and the trajectory of the rupee, especially against the dollar, would determine in which direction the two leading indices__sensex and nifty go. And these two vital factors would be decided by the direction of the war in West Asia.

INDICES SINCE WAR STARTED

Index Name	Close		Change	
	27-2-26	20-3-26	Pts	%
BSE PSU BANK	5528.8	4827	-701.8	-12.7
BSE OIL & GAS	29595.7	25977.4	-3618.3	-12.2
BSE AUTO	62236.9	54717.7	-7519.2	-12.1
BSE BANKEX	68139.5	60173.3	-7966.2	-11.7
BSE Clean Environment	5770.3	5917.5	147.2	2.6
BSE Utilities	5385.5	5406.9	21.4	0.4
BSE POWER	6967.1	6923.8	-43.3	-0.6

On Friday, while the sensex closed at 74,533 points, down 8.3% since the war started, nifty has lost 7% to close at 23,115 points.

According to media reports, the war in West Asia has taken a turn in favour of Iran. Although the US has given a 48-hour deadline to Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz, a vital link for the global energy supply chain, Iran has declined to do so. Market players feel this may complicate the old crude oil and natural gas market, keeping prices elevated.

Late on Friday, as Brent crude price rallied closer to the $110/barrel level, after initially dipping towards the $100 level early in the session. As a result of the late rally, in the US, Dow Jones index closed 1% lower, the Nasdaq Composite 2% and the S&P 500 was down 1.5%. Earlier in the session as oil prices dipped, the sensex closed 326 points or 0.4% higher.

According to Ajit Mishra, SVP - Research, Religare Broking, the upcoming week is expected to remain data-sensitive amid ongoing global uncertainties. "Developments in the West Asia conflict and movements in crude oil prices will continue to act as key external drivers and are likely to dictate the near-term market trend," Mishra wrote in a note.

"On the domestic front, investors will closely monitor HSBC Flash PMI data for Manufacturing, Services, and Composite segments, which will provide an early indication of business activity trends. Additionally, Industrial Production data will be tracked for insights into the strength of economic momentum."

As regards FPI selling, market players are surprised at the speed of selling from stocks (over Rs 93,600 crore net outflow in Mar so far). "The complete negative stance of the FPIs towards India is evident from the fact that they are selling recklessly without regard for valuations," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments. "A reversal of the FPI selling will happen only when the war ends and normalcy returns to the market."

WA projects largely unaffected: L&T

Reeba.Zachariah
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Mumbai: Construction and engineering giant Larsen & Toubro, which has been operating in West Asia (WA) for over three decades, said a small portion of its regional projects has been affected by the ongoing geopolitical crisis. Deputy managing director Subramanian Sarma said 5% of L&T's West Asia projects, mainly those near sensitive areas such as military bases and airport zones, have been paused, with some work halted at customer request.

"However, 95% of the projects are operating as usual, which is good news across our 100 sites in the Middle East," he added.

The company, which employs 8,000 people in the region, said all its staff and roughly 2,000 family members are safe. Another 10,000–15,000 contractors working on various projects are also unaffected.

> As we built our West Asia portfolio over the years, we always discussed how to deal with such geopolitical situations. Our risk committee and board have had extensive deliberations. We structured our portfolio through diversification, careful customer selection, and the deployment of senior leadership in the region
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>
>
> —Subramanian Sarma | DEPUTY MD, L&T

Sarma added that the company is closely monitoring the situation on a daily basis, with senior leadership teams stationed in the region in constant communication with employees, customers, government authorities and other stakeholders.

While operations remain largely stable, he flagged logistics as a key concern. Over the past two weeks, material movement, especially sea shipments from China and Europe has been affected, with fresh consignments yet to be dispatched.

However, supplies sourced locally within countries such as Saudi Arabia and across Gulf Cooperation Council nations remain unaffected, with road transportation continuing as usual.

To mitigate disruptions, L&T is exploring alternative logistics routes, including shipments via ports in the Red Sea and Oman followed by road transport.

The company has enough raw material for two to three months but warned that a prolonged conflict could create supply challenges, particularly through seaports.

Despite the situation, customer engagement, invoicing and payments continue without disruption.

West Asia, which was described by Sarma as a "second home," accounts for roughly a third of L&T's inflows, backlog and revenue.

Analysts at foreign brokerage CLSA had estimated that a March blockade of the Strait of Hormuz could reduce the company's consolidated earnings per share by 1.8%. L&T's regional operations span civil construction, hydrocarbons, renewable energy and data centres.

Sarma said that the company has built a robust framework to navigate risks. "As we built our West Asia portfolio over the years, we always discussed how to deal with such geopolitical situations. Our risk committee and board have had extensive deliberations. We structured our portfolio through diversification, careful customer selection, and the deployment of senior leadership in the region— six or seven senior vice presidents are based there. This preparedness is helping us manage the current situation effectively."

Sebi board to consider FPI settlement norms ease

New Delhi: Market regulator Sebi's board is set to meet today to deliberate on a wide-ranging agenda, including a proposal to ease fund settlement norms for foreign portfolio investors, and changes to regulatory frameworks for market intermediaries, people familiar with the matter said. AGENCIES

TOI IN THE CLASSROOM

The Hybrid Way: Mixing Equity and Debt in Mutual Funds

Given current geopolitical uncertainties and the resultant volatility, financial planners are advising investors to be cautious and opt for hybrid schemes that combine equity and debt, rather than going all out on any single asset class, which can prove risky

Invesco Mutual Fund
An investor education and awareness initiative

For Know Your Customer (KYC) guidelines along with the documentary requirements and procedure for change of address, phone number, bank details, etc., please visit the Education and Guidance section on www.invescomutualfund.com. Investor should deal with only SEBI registered Mutual Funds, details of which can be verified under "Intermediaries/Market Infrastructure Institutions" on https://www.sebi.gov.in/index.html. For any grievance / complaint, please call us on 1800-209-0007 or write to us at mfservices@invescoindia.com. Alternatively, complaints can be registered on the SEBI SCORES Portal at https://scores.sebi.gov.in

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

Why Use Schemes That Mix Equity And Debt?

Schemes that allocate to both equity and debt help manage volatility and investor behaviour better. By blending equity for growth and debt for stability, these funds aim to provide a smoother investment journey. When stock markets decline, equity-only funds can lose 10–30% of their value in a short period. Debt instruments, however, are generally more stable and generate regular income. A scheme that combines both asset classes can significantly reduce the overall drawdown in an investor's portfolio during a bear market.

Which Types Of Funds Mix Equity and Debt?

Investors can choose from several categories based on their risk appetite:

a) Aggressive Hybrid Funds: These schemes allocate 65% to 80% of their portfolio to equity, with the balance invested in debt and money market instruments.

b) Balanced Advantage or Dynamic Asset Allocation Funds: These schemes invest in a mix of equity and debt based on market valuations, following a predefined investment model. Typically, they increase equity exposure when markets are down and reduce it when markets are elevated. They may hold up to 35% in debt, along with some allocation to arbitrage, with the remainder in equity.

c) Equity Savings Funds: These invest in equity, debt and arbitrage opportunities in both cash and derivatives segments of the equity market. The combined equity and arbitrage exposure typically constitutes at least 65% of the portfolio, while the unhedged equity portion usually ranges between 20% and 35%.

How Are Hybrid Funds Treated For Tax Purposes?

Most hybrid fund categories mentioned above are treated as equity funds for taxation purposes, which is a key advantage for HNIs. If held for less than one year, gains are taxed as short-term capital gains at 20%. If held for more than one year, gains are taxed as long-term capital gains at 12.5%.

Biggest Benefit Of Such Funds?

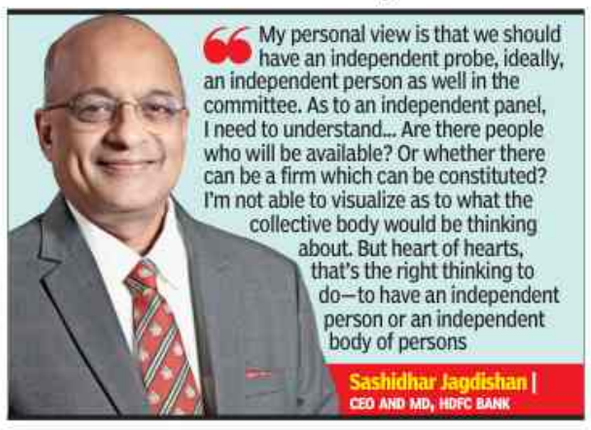
Hybrid funds offer automatic asset allocation, which means there's an element of disciplined portfolio management without requiring active intervention from the investor.

— PRASHANT MAHESH

Differences on people issues were dealt with maturity: HDFC CEO

Sidhartha & Mayur Shetty | TNN

HDFC Bank chief executive officer and managing director Sashidhar Jagdishan said in an interview with **TOI** that there were matters on which he and the former chairman agreed to disagree on some matters, and these were dealt with maturity on the board, and his resignation came as a surprise. However, Chinese whispers gave these a dramatic flavour outside.



> My personal view is that we should have an independent probe, ideally, an independent person as well in the committee. As to an independent panel, I need to understand... Are there people who will be available? Or whether there can be a firm which can be constituted? I'm not able to visualize as to what the collective body would be thinking about. But heart of hearts, that's the right thinking to do—to have an independent person or an independent body of persons
>
> Sashidhar Jagdishan | CEO AND MD, HDFC BANK

■ When did you come to know about the resignation of Atanu Chakraborty?
After 4 p.m., there were a few members who were a part of the nomination and remuneration committee (NRC) who got to know at about 2:30 p.m. But I got to know as the meeting was being opened up.

■ What was your initial reaction?
Obviously, like every other member of the board, very shocked because there was no reason until then for him to do what he did because he was at the helm; he was rather intense and enjoying his role. He was efficiently handling the matters. So, we did ask him. We were even more shocked by the insertion of these two lines. We asked him, "If you do have any concerns or issues, why don't you please table the same?" To which he said there were no issues to share. The board asked him vociferously to remove it. He remained steadfast and we had to accept and move on.

■ Has the board constituted a committee or is looking at an independent evaluation? Will you recuse yourself if there is an independent enquiry?
We will be convening multiple board meetings during the course of the week. There will be other meetings which we will convene to constitute such studies or examinations as they deem appropriate. It is very premature. If the board process says it is going to be independent, whether it's a committee or otherwise, I'm not going to be a part of the committee.

■ As CEO, are you comfortable with an independent investigation? Do you see the need for a completely independent panel?
My personal view is that we should have one, ideally, an independent person as well in the committee. As to an independent panel, I need to understand... Are there people who will be available? Or whether there can be a firm which can be constituted? I'm not able to visualize as to what the collective body would be thinking about. But heart of hearts, that's the right thinking to do—to have an independent person or an independent body of persons.

■ There have been rumours about issues between you and the former chairman which led to this episode.
In good governance, it is important that there are constructive deliberations and discussions. But I need to put my differing views on the table and not necessarily accept whatever is being thrust upon. I would expect a similar thought process in board and committee discussions. So, I'm not apologetic that there have been cases where we have agreed to disagree. But it is only on substantive matters, and not on all matters. They could be people issues. For example, we would have a view as management on promotions or in reorganizations. Or it could be performance assessment matrices: what should be thresholds for a good performance.

■ There was talk that the former chairman had strong views on some issues and addressed executives, and at some point, RBI had a word with him. Are you aware of that?
No, on the latter one, I don't have visibility. I'm not aware of this. But the ultimate authority of approval is with NRC, where he's just a member; he is not the one who does that.

■ One of the reports spoke about a power struggle in management... there have been talks about division heads behaving like Satraps.
One of the positives of HDFC Bank is there are people with a lot of institutional knowledge. This gives solidity to the organization. So, if some people have this perception, that is unfortunate. I am proud of my team. I wish I could protect and have all of them during my tenure. And, if at all I'm nominated or if the approvals come even in future, I would like to carry on with my team. If I'm unable to satisfy their ambitions, I'll be sad to see them go. But having said that, we have enough depth in the organization.

■ The action against the employees for mis-selling was taken immediately after the chairman resigned. There are reports of a police complaint filed by an employee, which triggered all this. Can you clarify?
No link exists between the AT1 bond issue and the chairman's exit. There is a timing overlap, nothing more. The Dubai regulator triggered a review that examined staff accountability, with the disciplinary panel sending findings to the board's nomination committee, reflecting a rule-bound process. The issue was a Dubai onboarding/documentation gap, not misselling. Gaps were identified and actions taken across levels. In the Credit Suisse issue, the clients were well off and could take rational financial decisions. But when they lost money, they tried to find technical loopholes and tried to pin blame on the distributor. One issue was that: a Dubai RM sold the bond to a client, though Dubai onboarding was also required. The gaps have since been fixed, with policies and processes tightened and now aligned with jurisdictional norms.

Ex RBI ED Kattoor appointed South Indian Bk chairman

Mumbai: South Indian Bank has appointed Jose Joseph Kattoor as non-executive part-time chairman (independent director) for a term of three years, after receiving approval from Reserve Bank of India on Feb 3, 2026. Jose Kattoor succeeds V J Kurian, who completed his tenure on Sunday. Kurian had been associated with the bank's board since 2018 as an independent director. Kattoor has over three decades of experience at RBI, where he served from 1991 until his retirement in 2023 as executive director. TNN

Dredging Corp to explore new markets

New Delhi: Dredging Corp of India is looking to more than double topline to Rs 3,000 crore in five years, the company's MD & CEO Capt S Divakar said, adding, the company is looking to explore new markets and areas to achieve this goal. Divakar said DCIL is looking to participate in new maintenance dredging tenders, reclamation projects. AGENCIES

Infy trims WFH, boosts office days

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Infosys is tightening its hybrid work policy, requiring employees to work from the office for at least 10 days every month starting April 1, as it pushes for greater in-person collaboration.

In an internal communication, the company said the revised hybrid model aims to balance flexibility with the benefits of physical workplace interactions, including learning, innovation and team building. The new guidelines significantly limit additional work-from-home (WFH) flexibility. Employees currently working from locations other than their designated base have been asked to return to their assigned development centres. Those on full-time WFH arrangements will also need to comply with the 10-day monthly office attendance requirement.

Infosys said it has been encouraging employees over the past few quarters to increase their time in office, with attendance expectations varying based on business needs. Extended remote work will now be allowed only for employees returning from maternity leave and those with critical medical conditions. Such cases will require approval through the company's "Hello Doctor" process, which permits up to 30 additional WFH days at a time.

The move reflects a broader shift across India's IT sector, where companies are recalibrating remote work policies after pandemic-era flexibility. The company added that the revised policy is intended to support professional growth and employee well-being, while ensuring better outcomes for clients.

'RETURN TO OFFICE'

Until now, Infosys had been relatively flexible. While employees were encouraged to spend at least 10 days a month in office, exemptions could be granted with manager approval, including the option to work from a development centre closer to home.

In contrast, rivals have taken stricter approaches. Tata Consultancy Services has implemented a five-day office work policy linked to variable pay. Wipro requires employees to be in office three days a week, while HCLTech mandates 12 days of in-office attendance per month.

Indian households hold $5tn worth of gold: Kotak report

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Mumbai: The recent steep rise in the price of gold has catapulted the total estimated value of the yellow metal with Indian households to over $5 trillion, pegging it at about 125% of the country's GDP. However, this massive gold purchase year after year "represents a conversion of financial savings (bank deposits) into physical assets. This is tantamount to exports of household capital," a report by Kotak Institutional Equities noted.

The report has used data till Jan 2026. At $5 trillion, this translated to about Rs 445 lakh crore at end-Jan. This would have been slightly lower than India's market capitalisation which was at Rs 460 lakh crore, BSE data showed.

"The value of stock of gold with households is now a sizable 65% of the non-property stock of wealth with Indian households," the report noted. "We estimate the value of stock of gold with Indian households at 175% of value of deposits and equity with (them)." It estimated that the value of gold with household has gone up by more than four times in about five years: from Rs 109 lakh crore at end-March 2019 to Rs 445 lakh crore by end-Jan this year. And most of it has come through the import channel.

Kotak sells stake in cap mkt lending arm

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Kotak Mahindra Bank said on Saturday that its wholly-owned subsidiary Kotak Mahindra Capital Company (KMCC) will sell close to 31% stake in Infina Finance — a capital market lending arm — to a group of investors including the estate of Rakesh Jhunjhunwala through Aryaman, Aryavir, and Nishtha Jhunjhunwala Discretionary Trusts, Derive Trading and Resorts, Bright Star Investments, and KF Trust for around Rs 1,293.9 crore, reducing its holding from about 50% to 19%.

Before the transaction, KMCC held 49.99% in Infina Finance, while the Kotak family held 50.01% through various entities and trusts, including KF Trust. After the transaction is completed on or before March 31, 2026, the Kotak family and associated trusts are expected to hold around 59%, KMCC will hold 19%, the Jhunjhunwala estate will hold 12.1%, and Derive Trading and Bright Star Investments will hold 9.9%.

Our systems and oversight mechanisms robust: Mistry

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Mumbai: HDFC Bank's interim chairman Keki Mistry said the bank's management reviews every issue and takes corrective action. His comments come in the wake of the sudden resignation of former chairman Atanu Chakraborty three days ago, citing misalignment between certain practices and his values and ethics.

Chakraborty's exit has been marked by investor anxiety, sharp market moves, and questions over governance, though tempered by regulatory reassurance.

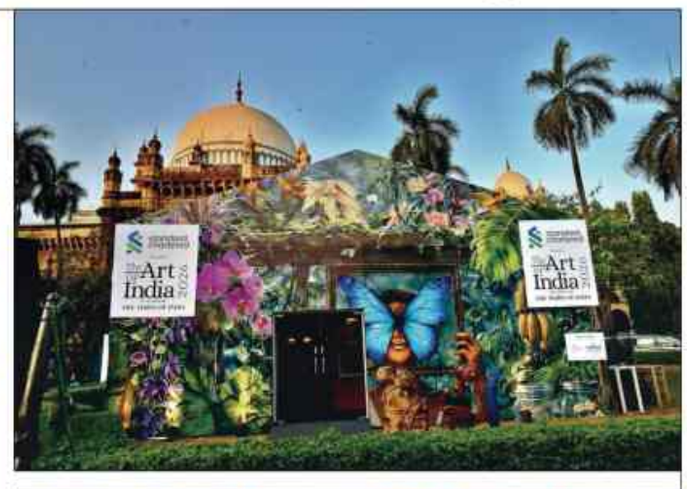
Mistry told **TOI**, "At the bank, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of governance and accountability. Any issue that warrants looking into, is done so with rigour. Even an isolated incident requiring a review and corrective action is given due importance. I want to reiterate that our systems and oversight mechanisms are robust and we remain committed to upholding the trust placed in us by all our stakeholders."

Earlier, Mistry said the management would be speaking to all major shareholders and that "whatever fears are there in people's mind will get addressed." He said it was a matter of time before confidence returned and that people would understand, particularly given the RBI clarification that there was "nothing serious and wrong in any manner whatsoever in the bank."

From canvas to cloth, terracotta to steel, AOI brings India's living art traditions together

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pics: S L Shanth Kumar, Uma Kadam



Clockwise: Art lovers browse through nearly 300 artworks on display at CSMVS, where specially designed hangars carry art beyond conventional galleries; Union minister Nitin Gadkari, who inaugurated the exhibition, with veteran artist Paresh Maity and PD Singh, CEO of Standard Chartered India & South Asia

"I'm very impressed by the sheer variety of Indian artists here — from large-scale paintings to smaller works, across different materials and styles. What stands out as well is the strong presence of indigenous artists — voices from different regions and the countryside — **Erik af Hällström** | CONSUL GENERAL OF FINLAND

standard chartered Presents The Art of India 2026 An initiative by THE TIMES OF INDIA

Exhibition is on in Mumbai till March 29 at the CSMVS lawns, 11am to 8pm daily

The lawns of CSMVS don't usually look like this. Three specially designed hangars rising like temporary galleries, their walls carrying works of art on either side. For many artists, the idea of showing within the grounds of a museum that houses centuries of art and archaeological objects might once have felt far off. For the Mumbai leg of Art of India (AOI), that dream is now a reality as the lawns opened out into a weeklong public exhibition space for its fifth edition.

At the inauguration of AOI on Saturday evening, union minister Nitin Gadkari spoke of art not as something confined to galleries, but as something that runs through everyday life in the crafts and traditions of how people live and create in India. "Across districts, lifestyles, food habits, clothing and cultural practices differ. Music and entertainment traditions also vary. Across the country, every state has its own speciality. Our history, culture and heritage are the most important sources of inspiration and motivation," said Gadkari.

Building on that idea of Indian art's ubiquity, bridging the "north, south, east and west and making a vast nation feel closer", artist Paresh Maity said, "Art should be public, not just in a private place. Indian art has been public for centuries — Ajanta, Ellora, Konark — they are all public art."

This plays out just as clearly across the works on display at AOI, which carry traces of the regions and traditions they come from. Sometimes through the materials used, and sometimes through what it depicts.

In Anu Malhotra's towering Totem 5, wood and enamel come together to channel fire, crowned with Garuda and a lion head, pulling from mythology to speak of power and renewal through one object. In contrast, Bhuri Bai's Bhil painting turns to the visual language of her community. Built through dense, hand-dotted patterns and bright, unmissable colours, the work carries the storytelling instinct of Bhil art, where birds and animals gather into lively compositions.

Sanjay Chitara's Ambe Mata ni Pachedi continues a long-standing textile tradition of devotional storytelling. Made by the Vaghari community in Gujarat, these cloth paintings once served as portable shrines for those denied temple entry. Created with natural dyes on cotton using a bamboo stick, they place the goddess at the centre surrounded by dense narrative motifs.

Tradition as performance comes alive in Kanu Behera's Bagha Nata 3, where Odisha's tiger dance is captured mid-energy with a painted body, drums beating, and the whole scene almost moving off the canvas. Pragya Aggarwal's Echoes of Om brings together visual art, sound, and meditation through hand-painted pure pashmina as the base against a string of traditional ghungroos responding softly to movement.

Across the exhibit, materials themselves carry stories. Dr Janardhan Rao Havanje's Tree of Life, in lime and mud in the Kaavi tradition, feels almost architectural in its replication of temple

walls and domestic sacred spaces.

Vijaya Chauhan's Smart Association uses terracotta, steel and jute to turn memory into something tactile, like a stack of pages held together by a spine. Pragati Mathur's Thar moulds metal into something unexpectedly soft, using copper textile to turn metal into both material and metaphor to mirror the resilience of deserts.

You also see tribal and folk art mingle companionably with the modern and the contemporary through new interpretations of traditional motifs and styles. Rakesh Bhawar casts Bhil iconography in striking neon tones, with rows of pointillist horses, tree branches in their mouths, lined up against a hot pink background in Pithora Dev ke Ghore, while Madan Meena sets kurjan birds in flight across a block-printed Ajrakh landscape, tracing their route from Kota to Barmer. His work, Mapping Cultures–3, is also an exercise in cartography and craft history, speaking to Ajrakh's origins in Sindh and its Islamic influences, characterised by geometric kharak motifs. Geometry is a thread in Sangam Vankhade's paper-cut series Heritage, too, with intricate lacework of stone jalis and arched doorways.

The exhibition moves between the sacred and the playful, without trying too hard that art isn't separate from life. Be it Vijay Uikey's dog clutching a circle of fish, offering a fresh reading of Gond depictions of nature, or Ramgopal Kumawat's miniature-style figures in traditional Rajasthani attire placed in unexpected scenes — tossing a ball, paragliding over a fort, even reading The Times of India. Then there's Arzan Khambatta's wood and iron riff on Renaissance art 'Michael & J'Lo', folding in pop culture and wordplay.

Even Alexander Zachariah's Chai Series captures the intimacy of small-town tea shops. Set against its hum, the surreal work draws from the artist's early college years spent debating everything from Marquez and Milan Kundera to Satyajit Ray and Dali. The painting captures that wandering energy of adda and its big ideas within mundane moments.

Across it all, landscapes as the leitmotif of this year's AOI unfold in multiple ways. "The beauty of Indian visual arts lies in its diversity and material richness, along with its deep spiritual grounding. Each state has its own forms, colours, symbols, metaphors and cultural expressions. This coexistence of tradition and modernity, the tangible and intangible, together shape our landscapes," explains Alka Pande, AOI's curator.

"India's artistic heritage and dynamic growth story are inseparable. At Standard Chartered, we've been a part of this narrative for over 170 years. AOI 2026 celebrates the cultural capital central to India's identity," says PD Singh, CEO of Standard Chartered India & South Asia, AOI's presenting partner.

Anu Malhotra's Totem 5, a towering nine-foot work in wood and enamel

ART BYTES

"Every year, the Art of India just gets better and better, but this time I'm especially amazed by the display — it's miles ahead. It feels like everything has jumped several notches. And of course, the stunning CSMVS museum backdrop really enhances the experience

Brinda Miller | CHAIRPERSON OF KALA GHODA ASSOCIATION

"I was particularly drawn to the Paresh Maity painting on the Mahakumbh. There's something about the colours, the light, and the sentiment it conveys. Varanasi is a place I have yet to visit, but this makes me want to go even more. The tribal art on display is also fascinating — the combination of materials like silk, cotton, and wood, along with the techniques, is remarkable.

Monica Ommundsen Nagelgaard | CONSUL GENERAL OF NORWAY

"AOI has truly gone from strength to strength. What excites me is that it's not just about art anymore — it's about supporting the entire ecosystem, which is so important from a practitioner's point of view. Art today is also a revenue generator — just look at the scale, the sponsors, the ambition of the show. I love the new venue, and the curation and presentation have really elevated the experience

Asad Lalljee | CURATOR OF ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

Kilometrage allowance hiked by 25% for train crew

New Delhi: Effective from Jan 2024, Indian Railways has increased the rates of Kilometrage Allowance and Allowance in lieu of Kilometrage (ALK) by 25% for all running staff across its system.

The updated rates will benefit over two lakh railway personnel, including loco pilots, assistant loco pilots, firemen, guards and other running staff. The decision follows the hike in Dearness Allowance to 50%.

While other Indian Railway employees received an increase in travelling allowance earlier, the kilometrage allowance had remained stagnant until now, leading to discontent among affected personnel. The issue had been raised by All India Loco Running Staff Association and railway federations.

"The revision will benefit running staff across Indian Railways by ensuring better compensation aligned with the current Dearness Allowance levels. It reflects Indian Railways' continued commitment to the welfare and financial betterment of running staff, who form the backbone of its operations," an official statement said.

Brothers returning from namaz killed

Two brothers, Mohd Bhura (40) and Mohd Samuddin (36), returning from Eid namaz, were brutally attacked with knives and sticks by a large crowd, including their neighbour, and allegedly killed over a Rs 1,000 monetary dispute, reports **Rahul Singh**.

The incident took place in Mehrmati Ganeshpur village of Meerut's Sardhana area on Sat. The victims were brothers of the village pradhan.

The attack seemed to be premeditated, with assailants repeatedly stabbing the men to death, the locals added.

Maoist endgame nears, but no political fanfare in offing

Idea Was To Create Right Mindset Among All Stakeholders

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Sources said that even though the March 31 deadline has dominated the discourse on Left-wing extremism for the past one-and-a-half years, the actual date is unlikely to see any victory processions or chest-thumping by the political leadership

New Delhi: The March 31 deadline set by home minister Amit Shah for the elimination of Left-wing extremism (LWE) from the country may pass uneventfully, after having served its purpose of creating the right psychological mindset among all the stakeholders -- security and police forces, local administration, political leadership of all affected states, the Maoist leadership and cadres, and the common people.

Sources said that even though the March-31 deadline has dominated the discourse on Left-wing extremism for the past one-and-a-half years, the actual date is unlikely to see any victory processions or chest-thumping by the political leadership. At most, there may be references to it in political speeches and public addresses by dignitaries, especially during visits to the states once affected by LWE — that the govt had delivered on its promise to end Naxalism within the timeline indicated by it.

"The purpose of the deadline was to set a definite time-goal for taking the fight against Naxalism to its logical conclusion so that all hands were on deck and the counter-Naxal machinery could work in mission mode, with time-bound planning of operations to decimate the leadership and the systematic launch and implementation of initiatives aimed at rehabilitating surrendered Maoists and rebuilding villages..." said a Central govt officer.

The results are there for all to see: the entire apex CPI (Maoist) leadership — barring one politburo member, Misir Besra, and one key commander, Papa Rao — have either been neutralised or have surrendered since announcement of the March-31 deadline. CPI (Maoist) is now no longer a cohesive unit but a loose bunch of Maoists hiding in the forests as minuscule, disjointed groups with no chain of command in place.

"Obviously, the deadline created a psychological pressure on Maoist leaders to decide between facing bullets and taking the chance to lead a normal life... As their senior colleagues fell to bullets, the remaining politburo and central committee members started leaning towards the latter option. The March-31 deadline surely played on their minds...to make them exercise this choice sooner than later," P Sundarraj, inspector general (Bastar range), Chhattisgarh police, told **TOI**.

After farewell to arms, Maoists pick up pens

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The programme, aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, is part of the Chhattisgarh govts's surrender and rehabilitation policy

Raipur: A batch of 85 surrendered Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district wrote a basic literacy test this week after completing training under the Ullas Nav Bharat Saksharta Programme, some picking up a pen for the first time.

The cadres had spent decades carrying guns through dense forests across Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand. Bijapur is among the country's worst Maoist-affected districts.

"These are individuals who never had the chance to go to school. Now they are learning to read, write and rebuild their lives," Bijapur SP Jitendra Yadav said.

Officials said the shift was both symbolic and defining. In a district long infamous for Naxalite insurgency, surrendered cadres sitting for exams are setting an example for those still stranded at the fork in the road.

The programme, aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, forms part of the state's surrender and rehabilitation policy. Alongside financial assistance and livelihood training, Chhattisgarh has focused on education as a tool for reintegration.

Before this batch, 272 surrendered cadres had completed basic literacy training, Yadav said.

Many now lead stable lives as workers, farmers or small entrepreneurs.

"The aim is to take misguided youth away from the path of violence and put a pen in their hands," he said.

Cops: Man held in Shetty firing linked shooter to Lawrence gang

Mumbai: Uttar Pradesh resident Pradeep Sharma (20) alias Golu, arrested on Saturday in connection with the firing at filmmaker **Rohit Shetty**'s Juhu residence on February 1, had introduced the shooter to Lawrence Bishnoi gang associates, alleged police.

On Sunday, Sharma was produced before the holiday court, which remanded him in police custody till April 1.

Sharma, a school dropout, was tracked to Agra under the Bah police station jurisdiction and apprehended in a joint operation by the Mumbai Crime Branch and uttar Pradesh Special Task Force on Saturday.

Sharma is the 14th accused to be arrested in Shetty bungalow firing case.

During probe, officials learnt that Sharma was arrested in a firing case in Rajasthan in 2025. "After he was released on bail in January, the Bishnoi gang contacted him and asked him to arrange for a shooter. Sharma said he introduced them to Deepak," said the crime branch official.

On Feb 1, Deepak travelled to Mumbai and allegedly shot at Shetty's residence. Police said five rounds were fired outside the building and one bullet struck a glass panel.

Police said Sharma was arrested for conspiracy in the firing case. "At the time of the incident, Sharma was not present in Mumbai."

Sharma went into hiding and changed his contact details. He was caught after Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) Lakhmi Gautam supervised a team, including additional commissioner Shailesh Balkawade, DCP Raj Tilak Roshan and others, that traced his location through technical surveillance. Police are still trying to find who got the contract to supply the weapon. — **V Narayan**

'Offensive' posts: Goa police file suo motu FIRs

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From yoga workshops to memes and reels against politicians and parties, the FIRs registered are mostly against unidentified people

Panaji: Goa police have registered several suo motu FIRs against people who post "objectionable statements", "indecent comments" about women or other content that could "disturb public peace and harmony".

From yoga workshops to memes and reels against politicians and political parties, the FIRs have mostly been registered against unidentified people. Police constables attached to the social media monitoring cell are the complainants.

An FIR has been filed against an unidentified person for posting a reel on Facebook that contained edited visuals of traditional folk performers in a dramatised and satirical manner. It also contained portrayals of the CM with reference to recent controversial development projects which were ultimately scrapped by govt.

"The content was alleged to be misleading in nature, aimed at creating distrust against govt, and likely to disturb public peace and harmony within the state," said constable Shivanand Naik Vernekar in his complaint.

In another complaint, he said unidentified persons made an abusive, obscene, and objectionable statement against political parties. He also said an unidentified individual made indecent remarks towards a woman and passed inflammatory statements regarding the 'Viva Portugal' issue.

The statements were "lascivious and prurient, could induce individuals or the community to commit an offence against public tranquility and create disharmony", Vernekar said in his complaint, based on which an FIR was registered.

In yet another case, constable Suraj Shirodkar said in his complaint that an unidentified person created and circulated a fake, manipulated and AI-generated video titled 'Dabolim files' containing false information on the closure of Dabolim airport. He said this was to "misinform the public, create confusion, damage the reputation of public authorities, incite distrust in governance, and disturb public peace and order" within the state.

In another complaint, Vernekar said unidentified persons made an abusive, obscene, and objectionable statement against political parties. He also said an unidentified individual made indecent remarks towards a woman and passed inflammatory statements regarding the 'Viva Portugal' issue.

A French national recently had an FIR registered against him for organising a yoga workshop at Arambol in North Goa beach belt. He has since approached the HC to quash the FIR.

"The said reel contains sexually suggestive and explicit narratives relating to sexuality and intimacy, projected as spiritual or healing practices and publicly accessible, and offensive to public decency, thereby misleading the public, affecting social harmony, public order and distorting the image of Goa," constable Chandan Gaonkar had said in his complaint.

TIMES SPORT

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026

OSAKA SAYS SHE IS CONSIDERING HOW BEST TO BALANCE HER SCHEDULE WITH MOTHERHOOD

KERR OVERCOMES HOCKER'S CHALLENGE TO WIN 3,000M AT WORLD INDOOR ATHLETICS

RCB RETURN HOME CARRYING HOPE AND SCARS

Defending IPL Champions Look To Rebuild Identity While Balancing Optimism And Grief Following Last Year's Stampede

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Bengaluru: It took Royal Challengers Bengaluru 18 long seasons and three failed attempts in the title contest to finally lay their hands on the elusive IPL trophy. On June 3 last year, they edged out Punjab Kings by six runs in the final.

The wait was agonising — stretched across near-misses, heartbreaks and unwavering belief from one of the league's most loyal fan bases. But when the moment arrived, the celebrations were tragically cut short.

June 4, 2025, altered Bengaluru's sporting landscape in ways few could have imagined. Eleven lives were lost outside the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in a stampede during RCB's victory celebrations — less than 24 hours after their landmark win. What should have been a day of unfiltered joy turned into one of grief and disbelief, leaving an indelible scar on the city and the sport.

In the immediate aftermath, the title triumph faded into the background. The tragedy also cast a shadow over the iconic Chinnaswamy Stadium. The venue, which had hosted international matches for five decades, was barred from staging games.

It took almost nine months of effort to restore a sense of normalcy. A newly elected Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) administration, led by former India pacer Venkatesh Prasad, worked alongside state authorities to implement structural and logistical changes. Upgrades to infrastructure, revised safety protocols and multiple rounds of clearances were required before the government finally greenlit the return of competitive cricket at the venue.

Last Wednesday, the return quietly began. A group of RCB players, led by talisman Virat Kohli, walked back onto their home turf for a training session. There were no grand announcements — just a sense of purpose. Kohli and head coach Andy Flower addressed the squad, setting the tone for what lies ahead — a season that is as much about renewal as it is about defending a title.

While the memory of the stampede will never fully fade, RCB now step into a new chapter. They begin their campaign as defending champions — a position they have never occupied before — when they host Sunrisers Hyderabad in the season-opener on Saturday.

After finishing runners-up in 2009, 2011 and 2016, RCB now carry the weight — and privilege — of being title holders. Only Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians have successfully navigated the challenge of defending an IPL crown.

The question is whether RCB have the depth and resilience to follow suit.

On paper, they do. But the road ahead is not without obstacles.

The franchise is likely to begin the season without last year's leading wicket-taker for the team, Josh Hazlewood (22 wickets). The Australian quick is still recovering from Achilles and hamstring injuries that have kept him out of action since Nov 2025, forcing him to miss The Ashes and the T20 World Cup. His absence leaves a significant gap in both experience and control.

TATA IPL 5 DAYS TO GO

There is also uncertainty surrounding pacer Yash Dayal. The left-armer, who featured in 15 matches last season, has been absent from training sessions amid off-field issues, raising doubts about his availability.

Yet, RCB's think tank appears to have made contingency plans. A smart mini-auction strategy has ensured depth in the squad, with New Zealand seamer Jacob Duffy in line for his IPL debut. The presence of Bhuvneshwar Kumar, a seasoned campaigner adept with the new ball and at the death, offers stability to the bowling unit.

THE KOHLI FACTOR

For over a decade, RCB's batting fortunes have revolved around Virat Kohli. That dependence only intensified after the departures of AB de Villiers and Chris Gayle. Last season was no different in terms of output — Kohli amassed 657 runs, the third-highest in the league — but it marked a shift in the support around him.

Phil Salt's explosive 403 runs, skipper Rajat Patidar's composed 312, and contributions from Jitesh Sharma, Devdutt Padikkal and Tim David provided the balance RCB had often lacked in previous seasons.

The addition of Venkatesh Iyer further strengthens the batting order, bringing both power-hitting and a useful seam option. Meanwhile, England's Jacob Bethell's recent form only helps the team's cause.

One concern, however, is the lack of recent T20 game time for several members of the squad.

Beyond the immediate goal of defending the title, this season also represents a moment of transition. At 37, Kohli is closer to the twilight of his IPL career than its peak. While his presence remains central, RCB's long-term vision will inevitably involve building a side that can thrive beyond him.

For the team management, this is an opportunity to shape a more balanced identity — one that relies not just on individual brilliance, but on collective consistency.

Getty Images

MOURNING AFTER NIGHT: Just a few hours after RCB's emotional victory in the final over PBKS in Ahmedabad on June 3 , a tragic stampede in Bengaluru during victory celebrations the next day, caused the death of 11 fans, souring the taste of that triumph

THE RCB SWOT

Defending champions RCB look balanced on paper, but rust, injuries and expectations could shape their IPL campaign.

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Strength: RCB retained their core before the mini-auction and plugged key gaps, giving them a strong balance on paper. Virat Kohli and Phil Salt power the top order, while a solid group of finishers adds depth. The bowling attack blends firepower with experience, and Josh Hazlewood's return will further strengthen it. Most importantly, RCB have evolved into a side that now shows composure and consistency in crunch situations.

Weakness: Several players lack recent match momentum. Kohli's last competitive game was the ODI against New Zealand in Jan, while Bhuvneshwar Kumar hasn't played since the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy in Dec. This could affect RCB early in the season. Hazlewood's absence is another concern, as the Australian quick was central to their ability to make breakthroughs during last season's title-winning campaign.

Opportunity: RCB's young domestic core offers significant potential if used wisely. The presence of multiple all-round and pace options gives flexibility in team combinations. New Zealand seamer Jacob Duffy could make a strong case with an early impact, especially in Hazlewood's absence. Venkatesh Iyer, after a quiet 2025 season, has the opportunity to rediscover form and play a bigger role in the team's balance.

JACOB DUFFY

Threat: RCB enter the season with the added burden of being defending champions, increasing expectations and scrutiny. Managing pressure and maintaining consistency will be key. A slow start could disrupt momentum and expose vulnerabilities, especially with key players returning from injury or limited match time. Handling expectations and sustaining hunger after last year's triumph will be their main threats.

TIME TO ASK APOLLO AI

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Hardik all praise for MI's scouting system

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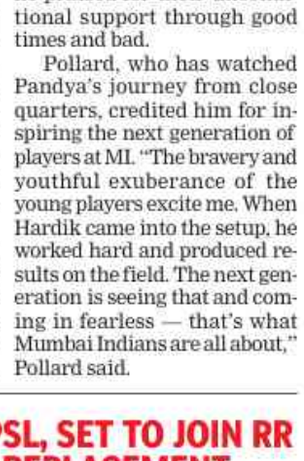

AFP

Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya and batting coach Kieron Pollard (R) attend a fan event in Mumbai on Sunday

Mumbai: The cricketing fraternity, today, acknowledges Hardik Pandya as one of the finest white-ball allrounders in the game, but when Mumbai Indians first spotted him in domestic cricket, he was just a hardworking youngster from Baroda, who only knew how to bat. Recounting his journey at a fireside chat with MI batting coach Kieron Pollard during the 'MI MIX' fan event at Jio World Garden on Sunday, Pandya said his rise was shaped by hard work and MI's sharp scouting system.

"Before I played for Mumbai Indians, I was just a pure batter for 17-19 years. The only thing I knew was hard work — if someone told me to run 12 rounds, I would run 15," Pandya said, recalling his early days in domestic cricket.

The turning point came during a Ranji Trophy match when MI scouts noticed him — almost by chance. "I was playing a Ranji game, and the scouts had not even come to watch me. That's the beauty of the Mumbai Indians' scouting system. They identified something special even when they were not there specifically for me. That shows the strength of their system," he said.

Pandya joined MI in 2015 as a young prospect and gradually transformed himself into a match-winning allrounder. The 32-year-old admitted that the transition from a pure batter to an allrounder was not an easy one and required him to adapt significantly, especially in terms of fitness and body management.

"I had to adapt. I had no idea how to look after my body or what it takes to be an allrounder. The only thing I knew was to work hard, and that helped me come out of difficult phases," he said, urging young cricketers to be disciplined.

Now set to lead Mumbai Indians in IPL 2026 for the third year in-a-row, Pandya made his ambitions clear — win a sixth Indian Premier League (IPL) title for the franchise.

"My ultimate dream is to win the IPL for the sixth time for MI. The franchise already has an amazing legacy, but I want us to play the best cricket Mumbai Indians have ever played and win as many trophies as possible," he said drawing loud cheers from fans, who he praised for their unconditional support through good times and bad.

Pollard, who has watched Pandya's journey from close quarters, credited him for inspiring the next generation of players at MI. "The bravery and youthful exuberance of the young players excite me. When Hardik came into the setup, he worked hard and produced results on the field. The next generation is seeing that and coming in fearless — that's what Mumbai Indians are all about," Pollard said.

Amid fuel crisis, PSL moves behind closed doors, opening ceremony shelved too

MOHSIN NAQVI

Lahore: The initial matches of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) will be played behind closed doors in Lahore and Karachi, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi said on Sunday, citing a fuel shortage triggered by the West Asia crisis. The T20 league, which begins on Thursday, has also cancelled its opening ceremony in Lahore and reduced venues from six to two. Fans will receive ticket refunds, Naqvi said, apologising for the inconvenience and expressing hope that the regional situation improves soon.

The decision followed consultations with PSL franchises and came after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged citizens to restrict movement due to the fuel crisis. Schools have been closed, work-from-home measures introduced and Eid holidays extended.

"We can't ask people to limit movement and then allow 30,000 spectators in stadiums daily. As long as this crisis continues, matches will be held without crowds," Naqvi said. He added that the league would streamline operations to reduce travel and stressed that hosting the PSL was necessary despite the disruption. REUTERS

The roar is back as nostalgia marries noise

CSK icons reunite at the Chepauk; Sanju says he wants to hit many sixes in the IPL

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Ramesh Shankar

THE NEW THALA: Former captain MS Dhoni watches as Sanju Samson (right) engages with the crowd during an exhibition match between the former and current CSK players on Sunday

Chennai: The MA Chidambaram Stadium turned back time on Sunday as the legendary heroes from Chennai Super Kings' past walked into the stadium in a first-of-its-kind 'Roar' event for the fans.

The OGs, the men who built CSK's legacy — Suresh Raina, Muttiah Muralitharan, Michael Hussey, Matthew Hayden, Ambati Rayudu, Dwayne Bravo — among others — slipped back into their vintage yellow jerseys and played an exhibition match against the current squad. The OGs got the better of the newbies with ease as the 28,000-odd crowd erupted into roars.

The star of the show, though, was Sanju Samson, for whom this will be his debut CSK season. Huge cheers were in store for him and the T20 World Cup winner assured that he will try and help the team lift the trophy.

"Really happy and grateful to be a part of such a great franchise and team. It was a goosebumps moment. Winning the World Cup for the country is something I had dreamed of for many years. I'm glad I was able to contribute. Now, I'm excited and looking forward to the next couple of months in the IPL with my new team, CSK. My approach would be simple — see the ball and hit the ball. I will look to hit a lot of sixes," said the wicket-keeper batter.

Samson's 'duel' with Sri Lankan great spinner Muralitharan also saw the loudest cheers of the evening. First, Samson politely played four dot balls to show respect. At one point, he stepped out looking to go big, missed, and MS Dhoni chose not to whip off the bails, a moment that drew smiles all around. However, Samson finished in style, striking two eye-pleasing boundaries.

As the crowd sang, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, Sanju is a superstar", CSK's 'Chinna Thala' Raina said that Samson's inclusion will be a major boost for CSK. "I want them to win the title this time. The team looks very strong. Sanju is back here (after the World Cup), and there are a lot of youngsters who will learn from MS Dhoni and go on to get the trophy. I hope the fans continue supporting CSK like they always have," Raina said.

CSK also inducted Raina and Hayden into their first-ever Hall of Fame.

SHANAKA SNUBS PSL, SET TO JOIN RR AS SAM CURRAN'S REPLACEMENT

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SHANAKA

Jaipur: Sri Lanka T20I captain and all-rounder Dasun Shanaka is set to join Rajasthan Royals (RR) for IPL 2026 as a replacement for injured England all-rounder Sam Curran, who is sidelined with a suspected groin injury.

Shanaka's move, which involves withdrawing from his Pakistan Super League (PSL) contract with Lahore Qalandars, comes as a setback for the PSL just days before the tournament begins. The 34-year-old had gone unsold at the IPL mini-auction in Abu Dhabi last Dec. He becomes the latest player to switch from PSL to IPL after Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani pulled out of his Islamabad United deal to join Kolkata Knight Riders as Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman's replacement.

Sources said Shanaka's signing is almost finalised, with only routine paperwork related to his PSL contract and a no-objection certificate (NOC) from Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) pending. He is expected to link up with the Royals squad in Guwahati, where RR open their campaign against Chennai Super Kings next week.

Spinners power SA against New Zealand

South Africa's spinners played a decisive role as the tourists won the fourth T20I against New Zealand by 19 runs on Sunday to square the five-match series 2-2. New Zealand were well placed to clinch the series midway through their chase in Wellington after the Proteas scored 164-5. However, from 88-3 after 10 overs, they lost wickets in rapid succession to be all out for 145 off 18.5 overs.

The match swung in favour of South Africa when spinners Keshav Maharaj and Prenelan Subrayen turned the screws through the middle stages of the chase. Captain Maharaj proved hard to score from as he took 2-22 off four overs.

FOURTH T20I

Subrayen, playing his first T20 international, bowled Dane Cleaver for 26 to spark New Zealand's middle order crumble and finished with 2-13 off three overs. Opener Tim Robinson top-scored with 32 for New Zealand while Proteas paceman Gerald Coetzee took 3-31.

South Africa's innings were dominated by 57 off 36 balls from wicket-keeper Connor Esterhuizen.

Brief scores: South Africa 164/5 in 20 overs (Connor Esterhuizen 57, Rubin Hermann 28 n.o; Kyle Jamieson 2-29) **bt New Zealand 145 all out in 18.5 overs** (Tim Robinson 32, Dane Cleaver 26; Keshav Maharaj 2-22, Prenelan Subrayen 2-13, Ottneil Baartman 2-30, Gerald Coetzee 3-31). AFP

Reuters

OUR CUP: Man City's Nico O'Reilly scored two goals in four minutes against Arsenal in the League Cup final at Wembley. City won 2-0

Araujo, Garcia secure win for leaders Barca

Reuters

RONALD ARAUJO

Barcelona: Ronald Araujo's first-half header gave Barcelona a 1-0 win at home against Rayo Vallecano on Sunday, with goalkeeper Joan Garcia delivering a standout performance to preserve the Catalan side's lead at the top of LaLiga.

Barcelona lead the standings with 73 points, seven ahead of second-placed Real Madrid, who have a game in hand and will host fourth-placed Atletico Madrid in a Spanish capital derby later on Sunday.

Araujo scored the winner in the 24th minute. However, the key man for the home side was goalkeeper Joan Garcia, who made a string of saves to deny Rayo. REUTERS

Senegal's Idrissa Gueye ready to 'hand back' AFCON medals

Paris: Midfielder Idrissa Gueye said that his Senegal side deserved to be Africa Cup of Nations champions but he was ready to "hand back the medals" to Morocco if it eases tension between the two countries. "I personally commit to collecting the medals and maybe giving them back to Morocco if that can ease tensions between the two countries," Gueye told Canal+ after his Everton side's 3-0 win over Chelsea in the EPL. "Titles are won on the pitch, not offices."

Forest win 3-0 at Spurs, Newcastle vs Sunderland match marred by crowd abuse

London: Nottingham Forest dealt fellow Premier League strugglers Tottenham Hotspur a bitter blow in their relegation battle, winning 3-0 to leapfrog their rivals. The Premier League game between Newcastle and Sunderland was stopped after there was a report of discriminatory abuse from the crowd. Sunderland's Lutsharel Geertruida, who is black, was the target of the abuse at St James' Park. **Sunderland won 2-1.**

Como take control of Serie A's final CL spot

Rome: Como took control of Serie A's final Champions League spot by thrashing Pisa 5-0 on Sunday for their fifth straight victory in Serie A. The victory boosted Cesc Fabregas' club three points clear of fifth-place Juventus.

PSG reclaim top spot in Ligue 1

Paris: Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Enrique hailed his side's "perfect evening" after reclaiming top spot in Ligue 1 by one point from Lens with a 4-0 victory over 10-man Nice. AGENCIES

Duplantis soars to title, equals Bubka's record

Torun (Poland): Armand Duplantis delivered a pole vault masterclass to win a fourth world indoor title on Saturday.

In a thrilling night of track and field in the Polish city of Torun, Switzerland's Simon Ehammer set a sensational world record in the men's heptathlon while Italy's Zaynab Dosso upstaged her rivals for gold in a loaded 60m.

Duplantis' return to the venue where he set his first world record (of 6.17m) back in 2020 proved a fortuitous one. He totally dominated proceedings, nailing all six of his vaults with aplomb to win with a commanding best of 6.25 metres, a championship record. Greece's Emmanouil Karalis claimed silver (6.05m). It was Duplantis' fourth world title, equalling Sergey Bubka's record.

WORLD INDOORS

In the women's 3,000m, Italy's Nadia Battocletti won gold. AFP

Anahat rules again

Abhay Bags Men's Crown

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Mumbai: India's teenage superstar **Anahat Singh** proved once again why she is one of the country's brightest Olympic medal prospects. The 18-year-old defended her title at the JSW Indian Open (a PSA Copper-level squash tournament) at the CCI's glass courts here on Sunday, defeating Egypt's Hana Moataz 3-1 (11-5, 11-6, 9-11, 11-6) in the final.

INDIA OPEN

The men's final, an all-Indian affair, saw Abhay Singh blank Veer Chotrani 3-0 (11-9, 11-8, 11-4). Abhay, runner-up last time, showed why he is the country's top-ranked player with fluent stroke-making, giving Chotrani little chance.

But the day belonged to Anahat. She came out firing, winning two sharp attacking points to set the tone. From there, she barely put a foot wrong, taking the opening game with a maturity that belied her age. What stood out was not just power, but control.

Anahat relied on placement, moving Hana corner to corner, stretching rallies before finishing them off. At 6-3, then 8-5, and eventually 10-5, she dictated proceedings. The second game followed a similar pattern; even a brief lapse didn't derail her as she surged to a 7-2 lead and closed it 11-6.

At two games up, the World No. 19 looked in complete control. Then came the wobble. To her credit, the teenager responded like a seasoned pro in the fourth game. Down 0-3 early, she reset, drawing level at 4-4 before unleashing a decisive smash at the end of a long rally, followed by a rare celebration.

From there, she shut the door.

RED CARPET, REAL HEROES

From Olympians and World Champions To Para-Athletes, **TOISA** Brought Together The Entire Spectrum Under One Roof

Pix: Sunil Kumar

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Lucknow: The third time, they say, is the charm. The Times of India Sports Awards (TOISA) returned to Lucknow for its third edition, delivering an evening that seamlessly blended sporting excellence with high-octane glamour, rolling out the red carpet for the royalty of Indian sport.

From Olympians and world champions to para-athletes and emerging stars, the ceremony brought together the full spectrum under one roof. Adding charm and energy to the evening were hosts Neha Dhupia and Angad Bedi, whose effortless stage presence and sharp banter kept proceedings lively throughout.

The venue sparkled with style as sport's biggest names arrived dressed for the occasion. Sharp suits, elegant sarees and statement silhouettes dominated the red carpet, offering a rare glimpse of athletes away from competition arenas and into the spotlight of national recognition. Camera flashes followed legends and first-time winners alike, underlining the scale and stature of the event.

One of the evening's most engaging segments came when Neha Dhupia invited members of the Indian women's cricket team, led by Harmanpreet Kaur, to centre stage, briefly shifting the tone from formal recognition to candid conversation and humour.

What followed was a lively, cricket-themed interaction that drew both laughter and applause. Using familiar on-field terms like LBW, umpire, bouncer and hit wicket, the players — Deepti Sharma, Harleen Deol, Shafali Verma and Harmanpreet — described one another off the field.

From social media habits to shopping confessions on tour, the exchange offered a rare glimpse into the team's off-field camaraderie. The segment peaked with a spontaneous dance, earning one of the loudest ovations of the night.

The evening also struck a thoughtful note when Neha Dhupia asked Taapsee Pannu, TOISA Ambassador of the Year, about portraying athletes on screen — what was more challenging: acting the role or training for it?

Taapsee was unequivocal. Coming even remotely close to an athlete's life, she said, was the toughest challenge. Calling herself a "wannabe athlete", she shared that many of her films were driven by a desire to learn new sports, adding that athletes are the country's true heroes — a sentiment that has consistently drawn her to such roles.

The exchange turned playful when she was asked about a sports biopic she would still like to do. Without hesitation, she named Sania Mirza, admitting that her lack of familiarity with tennis would make the challenge even more exciting. She described Mirza's journey as deeply inspiring.

As the night progressed, the chatter and laughter created a continuous rhythm. The most emotional moment of the evening came when para chess winner Vaibhav Gautam took the stage. As he was wheeled up to receive his honour, the entire hall rose in a spontaneous standing ovation.

The award was presented by a distinguished group that included Madan Lal, member of India's 1983 World Cup-winning squad, along with former hockey international MM Somaya and 2016 Paralympics silver medallist Deepa Malik.

The honours spanned 45 categories, with a strong emphasis on para-sports.

For Archana Singh (23), attending her first awards ceremony was "surreal and unforgettable". Ritika Sharma (21), a student at the University of Lucknow, felt the event struck the perfect balance between sport and entertainment.

It was not just about who won. It was about who showed up, how the evening felt, and how sport, style and stature came together to create a mood that lingered long after the lights dimmed.

TOP HONOURS: (Left) India women cricket captain Harmanpreet Kaur receives the Team of the Year award from UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath. (Above) Shuttler PV Sindhu is all smiles during the awards ceremony

TOISA
TIMES OF INDIA SPORTS AWARDS

WINNERS ALL

Sportsperson of the year (Male) | Samrat Rana

Sportsperson of the year (Female) | Smriti Mandhana

Badminton male | Lakshya Sen

Badminton female | Treesa Jolly

Cricket male | Shubman Gill

Cricket female | Deepti Sharma

Athletics (Track and field) male | Neeraj Chopra

Athletics (Track and field) female | Rupal Chaudhary

Equestrian | Ashish Limaye

Hockey male | Amit Rohidas

Hockey female | Navneet Kaur

Shooting male | Samrat Rana

Shooting female | Suruchi Phogat

Emerging sportsperson (combined) | Divya Deshmukh

Coach of the year (male, female combined) | Amol Muzumdar

Chess male | Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa

Chess female | Koneru Humpy

Archery male | Rishabh Yadav

Archery female | Jyothi Surekha

Billiards/Snooker | Pankaj Advani

Weightlifting male | Rishikanta Singh

Weightlifting female | Mirabai Chanu

Wrestling male | Sujeet Kalkal

Wrestling female | Antim Panghal

Squash male | Abhay Singh

Squash female | Anahat Singh

Table Tennis male | Manav Thakkar

Table Tennis female | Manika Batra

Team of the Year (combined from all sports) | Women's Cricket Team + Women's Blind Cricket Team

Tennis Male | Yuki Bhanbri

Tennis Female | Ankita Raina

Football male | Vishal Kaith

Football female | Soumya Guguloth

Kabaddi | Sanju Devi

Boxing male | Hitesh Gulia

Boxing female | Jasmine Lamboriya

Sailing | Vishnu Saravanan

Para Archery male | Harvinder Singh

Para Archery female | Sheetal Devi

Para Athlete (Track & Field) male | Shailesh Kumar

Para Athlete (Track & Field) female | Simran Sharma

Para Badminton male | Pramod Bhagat

Para badminton female | Nithya Sre

Para chess | Vaibhav Gautam

Para judo | Kapil Parmar

Para shooting male | Rudransh Khandelwal

Para shooting female | Avani Lekhara

Para Sportsperson of the year (Male) | Sumit Antil

Para Sportsperson of the year (Female) | Sheetal Devi

Para Coach of the year | Subash Rana

TOISA Mentor Of The Year | Leander Paes

Lifetime Achievement Award (Male) | PR Sreejesh

Lifetime Achievement Award (Female) | Mithali Raj

Special Recognition Awards (Cricket Male) | Kuldeep Yadav

Special Recognition Awards (Cricket Female) | Harmanpreet Kaur

Federation of the year | BCCI

The story of Lord's celebration: When Sachin said no but Dada said, 'Let's go'

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Lucknow: The image of then Indian captain Sourav Ganguly twirling his T-shirt from the Lord's balcony after the NatWest Trophy triumph in 2002 remains etched in the memory of cricket lovers. For some, it was a fitting response to Andrew Flintoff's similar gesture in India after an England victory; for others, it clashed with the sport's "gentlemanly" image.

What is less known, however, is that Ganguly had initially wanted the entire team to join him — an idea that was quietly vetoed by Sachin Tendulkar.

The anecdote was shared by BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla during the TOISA event, when he was asked about his most cherished cricketing memory.

Shukla said the NatWest Trophy final between India and England at Lord's on July 13, 2002, tops his list. Then serving as team manager, he recalled the emotional roller-coaster of the historic night.

"It was a great team with a blend of experience and youth, and we reached the final without much difficulty. In the final, England posted a mammoth 325, and I started panicking as we had to chase history to lift the trophy.

"Virender Sehwag assured me there was nothing to worry about. He opened the innings with Ganguly and forged a century partnership in 14 overs. But in the next nine overs, we were 146/5.

"But the two youngsters, Mohammad Kaif and Yuvraj Singh, played exceptionally well and scripted one of India's most famous wins."

The celebrations that followed were just as dramatic.

"Ganguly told me to ask the team to take off their T-shirts and celebrate. But Sachin advised against it, saying it wouldn't look appropriate. I agreed with him," Shukla said.

"But no one could stop Ganguly. He went out alone to the Lord's balcony and waved his T-shirt in the air — a moment that has since become one of the most iconic images in cricketing history."

Seeing Sanju Samson excel at T20 World Cup was special: Kuldeep

Lucknow: Kuldeep Yadav has been a cornerstone of India's spin attack since his arrival, maintaining the same calm, team-first attitude whether on the field or on the bench. Speaking to **Fazal Khan** on the sidelines of TOISA, the Kanpur-born wrist spinner reflected on his journey, recent highs and what lies ahead. Excerpts...

How does it feel to win two consecutive T20 World Cups?

It's an incredible feeling. Representing the country itself is a blessing and to win something for India while wearing the blue jersey is truly special.

Was it the biggest moment of your career?

For me, the biggest moment was actually taking up cricket. I wasn't initially interested, but my father encouraged me and enrolled me in an academy. From there to playing at different levels and eventually for India, it's been quite a journey. I feel fortunate that my father showed me the right path.

During your T20 World Cup-winning journey this time, was there a moment that made you emotional?

KULDEEP YADAV

Watching Sanju Samson score those crucial runs during the knockout stage of the World Cup made me emotional. I know him well, and over the past year he has been batting brilliantly in T20s, even though he didn't always get opportunities because of team combinations. Seeing him deliver when it mattered and help India win was very special.

How are your preparations for the upcoming IPL?

We (Delhi Capitals) have a very strong squad and performed well last season. Personally, my approach is simple — go out there and take wickets.

When will you start preparations for the ODI World Cup?

The World Cup is still 15-16 months away, so preparations will gradually build up, starting with the England tour later this year. I've been playing ODIs for nearly nine years now and it's been a rewarding format for me. The aim will be to replicate those performances on the biggest stage.

SNAP SHOTS

HUMPY PULLS OUT OF CANDIDATES EVENT

Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy on Sunday decided to withdraw from the FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament, citing concerns over her personal safety despite assurances from the organisers in the wake of the ongoing West Asia conflict. The Candidates, which will decide the challengers for the world championship crowns, is scheduled to begin in Paphos, Cyprus on March 28. The former world champion said the decision, though difficult, was necessary given the prevailing circumstances.

Aditi falls out of top-5: Indian golfer Aditi Ashok slipped down the leaderboard to tied 24th from tied 3rd after carding 1-over 73 on the third day of the Fortinet Founders Cup, in Menlo Park, California.

Top 10 finish for Diksha, Hitaashee: The Indian duo of Diksha Dagar and Hitaashee Bakshi finished in the top-10 at the Australian Women's PGA Championship in Gold Coast, Australia. Diksha carded a final round of 1-over 72 to end the week with a tied 7th finish at a total of 8-under par. Hitaashee ended tied 9th after carding 2-over 73 for a total score of 7-under par. The other Indian in the field who made the cut was Pranavi Urs and she finished T-48.

Pramod shines: Paralympic champion Pramod Bhagat secured two gold medals and one silver as India delivered a fine performance at the Spanish Para Badminton International 2026- II in Vitoria, Spain on Sunday. Bhagat produced a thrilling performance in the men's singles SL3, overcoming compatriot Nitesh Kumar 21-17, 10-21, 21-18 in the final. In the mixed doubles SL3-SU5, partnering Manisha Ramdass, he staged a comeback to defeat Brazil's Rogerio Junior Xavier de Oliveira and Edwarda De Oliveira Dias 13-21, 21-12, 21-19.

Dortmund, Kehl part ways: Borussia Dortmund sporting director Sebastian Kehl has ended his tenure "by mutual consent", the club said in a statement released on Sunday. The surprise announcement, which sees Kehl leaving with immediate effect, comes amid rumours linking the former Dortmund player, who won three Bundesliga titles during a 13-year stint with the club, to the sporting director job at Hamburg.

James breaks record: LeBron James broke the NBA record for most regular-season games played on Saturday, taking the court for his 1,612th in the Los Angeles Lakers last-gasp 105-104 victory against the Orlando Magic. The 41-year-old basketball icon's appearance took him one clear of the mark of 1,611 held by Robert Parish since his retirement in 1997.

Results: Oklahoma City 132 bt Washington 111; Charlotte 124 bt Memphis 101; LA Lakers 105 bt Orlando 104; Cleveland 111 bt New Orleans 106; Atlanta 126 bt Golden State 110; San Antonio 134 bt Indiana 119; Houston 123 bt Miami 122; LA Clippers 138 bt Dallas 131 (OT); Philadelphia 126 bt Utah 116; Milwaukee 108 bt Phoenix 105.

Champ Yashaswini sets sights on bigger stage

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Bengaluru: Ugadi marks new beginnings, celebrated with colour and cheer. For the Ghorpade family in south Bengaluru's Basavanagudi, the festivities stretched well beyond the festival — and for good reason.

On Saturday, Yashaswini Ghorpade became only the third woman paddler from the state to win the senior National table tennis crown, clinching the title in Indore. She joins an elite list featuring Archana Kamath and Usha Sunderraj.

For the 21-year-old, the triumph was both a breakthrough and a reward for persistence after a challenging phase. "The atmosphere at home is festive. Everyone is in a joyous mood," Yashaswini told TOI after edging past Syndrela Das 4-3 in a gripping final. The victory comes

ON THE RISE

after a difficult 2025, where titles eluded her across both domestic and international circuits. "Last year was disappointing. But this win gives me confidence to prepare better and deliver in upcoming tournaments," she said.

There is little time to celebrate. Yashaswini will next compete at the WTT Contender in Tunisia starting Tuesday, using the national crown as a springboard for a packed season ahead. Her focus is already on three major events in 2026 — the World Team Championships in London (April 28–May 10), the Commonwealth Championships in New Delhi (July 17–21) and the Asian Games in Japan (Sept–Oct).

"It's going to be a big challenge with top players from around the world. The

ghorpade_yashaswini/Instagram

BREAKTHROUGH: Yashaswini Ghorpade

quality will be very high, so I need to improve my game and be better prepared," she said.

Training under coach Anshuman Roy at the UTT-Skies High Performance Centre in the city Yashaswini has shown steady growth. Roy believes she has the tools to succeed at the highest level, but emphasises the need for refinement. "She has a strong backhand, good serves and makes smart decisions during rallies," Roy said.

But there are shortcomings she is working hard on. "Her forehand is an area opponents target at the top level. We've been working extensively on that — sometimes dedicating two out of three training hours to it. She also needs to build physical strength and improve fitness to compete consistently against top players," explained Roy.

With a national title finally in hand, Yashaswini's journey now shifts from promise to expectation.

Sanchez brace powers BFC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru FC registered their third win of the Indian Super League season, defeating Inter Kashi 3-1 in Kolkata on Sunday to move up to fourth on the table. A brace from Braian Sanchez and a strike by Ashique Kuruniyan powered the Blues to a comfortable win.

BFC suffered a setback even before kick-off, with key winger Ryan Williams picking up a muscle strain during the warm-up. He was replaced by Namgyal Bhutia, who made his first start of the season.

After settling into rhythm and dominating

ISL

possession early on, Bengaluru broke the deadlock in the 20th minute. Ashique capitalised on a defensive error, pouncing on a loose ball before firing a powerful left-footed shot into the roof of the net.

However, the lead was short-lived. In the 38th minute, Alfred Moya took advantage of a slip by Nikhil Poojary to go through on goal. Despite Gurpreet Singh Sandhu getting a hand to the shot, the ball found its way in, restoring parity for Inter Kashi.

Bengaluru made a change at the break, bringing on Suresh Wangjam for Lalremtluanga Fanai to bolster the midfield.

bengalurufc/X

SLICE OF ACTION: Bengaluru FC's Braian Sanchez heads the ball to score against Inter Kashi in Kolkata on Sunday

Sunil Chhetri nearly restored the lead in the 53rd minute, but his effort was straight at the goalkeeper. The breakthrough came in the 69th minute when Sanchez headed home after Inter Kashi goalkeeper Lluis Tarres failed to deal with a well-delivered set-piece. With the hosts pushing for an equaliser, BFC capitalised on the spaces opening up. Deep into stoppage time, a misplaced pass from the goalkeeper fell to Sanchez, who calmly chipped the ball home to seal the victory.

GOA STEAL LATE DRAW

It was a match that struggled for fluency, yet delivered late drama. FC Goa came from behind to earn a point against Chennaiyin FC who were playing their first ISL home match this season, reports **M Sudharshan** from Chennai. Following a closely-fought first half, Irfan Yadwad (48th minute) handed the hosts the lead, only for Sandesh Jhinghan to rise to the occasion in the 88th minute and snatch a 1-1 draw.

Results: Inter Kashi 1 (Alfred 38) lost to Bengaluru FC 3 (Ashique 20, Sanchez 69, 90+8); Chennaiyin FC 1 (Irfan Yadwad 48) drew with FC Goa 1 (Sandesh Jhinghan 88).

Sinner cruises, Mensik battles past Walton

World number two Jannik Sinner made a smooth start on Saturday at the Miami Open, where defending champion Jakub Mensik shook off a "horrible" first set to win his opening match. Six days after he lifted the Indian Wells trophy, Sinner launched his pursuit of tennis' "Sunshine Double" in confident style with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over 76th-ranked Damir Dzumhur.

Daniil Medvedev also had little time to adjust, but he managed to fight back for a 6-7 (10/12), 6-3, 6-1 victory over 19-year-old Japanese wildcard Rei Sakamoto. Mensik was feeling the after-effects

MIAMI OPEN

of illness as well as the pressure of defending his title in a rocky first set but righted the ship to beat Australian Adam Walton 3-6, 6-2, 6-4.

Fourth-seeded Coco Gauff led the way into the women's fourth round, roaring back for a 3-6, 6-0, 6-1 victory over fellow American Alycia Parks.

Teenagers Mirra Andreeva and Victoria Mboko booked a last-16 meeting that will be their third clash of the WTA season. Andreeva defeated Czech Marie Bouzkova 7-6 (7/4), 6-2, while 10th-seeded Canadian Mboko downed Russian qualifier Anastasia Zakharova 6-1, 7-5. AFP

CV Raman Nagar prevail

R Sachin and Sathish Kumar struck a goal apiece to power CV Raman Nagar to a 2-0 win over Shivaji Nagar in the KSFA Chief Minister's Cup football tournament in Bengaluru on Sunday. In another match at the Bangalore Football Stadium, Shanthi Nagar handed RR Nagar a 4-1 defeat.

Results: Group A: CV Raman Nagar 2 (R Sachin 20, R Sathish Kumar 77) bt Shivaji Nagar 0. **Group B:** Shanthi Nagar 4 (Roshan Singh 14, G John Peter 50-pen, Sanjay S 83, 90+7) bt RR Nagar 1 (Robinson A 41).
Today's matches: Group C: Rajaji Nagar vs Jayanagar (2pm); Sarvagnanagar vs Byatarayanapura (4.30pm).

CITY ROUND-UP

State TT squad announced: Tanishka Kalabhairav will lead Karnataka's challenge in the Sub-junior and cadet National Championships, to be held in Gandhidham, Gujarat, from Monday.

The squad: Boys: U-11: Sharvil Karambelkar, Arnav Mithun; **U-13:** Siddhanth M, Arnav Mithun, Mohith Belavadi, Satwik M; U-15: Reyansh Jalan, Tamoghna M, Vedant Vashisht, Aman George Thomas. **Coach-cum-manager:** Veeresh Mathapati **Girls: U-11:** Sakshya Santosh, Nandana Bandi; **U-13:** Sakshya, Mihika Udupa, Yuktha Harsha, Lakshmi Aashritha; **U-15:** Rashi Rao, Tanishka Kalabhairav, Mihika Udupa, Krisha Karkera. **Coach-cum-manager:** Sangam Bailoor. TNN

Karnataka women falter in final

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Karnataka's dominant run was snapped by Maharashtra, who produced a fine all-round performance, to clinch the BCCI women's U-23 One-Day Trophy title with a convincing 75-run win in Ranchi on Sunday.

Bhavika Ahire starred with the bat, while Akshaya Jadhav delivered with the ball as Maharashtra outclassed Karnataka.

Asked to bat, Maharashtra posted a formidable 286/8 in 50 overs, riding on Bhavika's century. Karnataka made an early breakthrough through Niki Prasad, who dismissed Kushi Mulla for a seven-ball duck. However, Ishwari Savkar (61) and Ishwari Awasare (36) steadied the innings with a crucial 76-run stand for the second wicket.

Karnataka fought back through Vandita Rao, who removed both Ishwaris in quick succession to leave Maharashtra at 108/3 in 23.2 overs. But Bhavika held firm, anchoring the innings with a

ONE-DAY TROPHY

composed 109 off 100 balls, an innings studded with 10 boundaries and three sixes.

Despite her efforts, Karnataka struggled to contain Maharashtra in the latter stages. Vandita finished with three wickets, while BG Tejashwini chipped in with two. Chasing 287, Karnataka never quite found momentum. They lost wickets at regular intervals and were eventually bowled out for 211 in 42.3 overs.

Rachitha Hatwar (63) and Niki Prasad (58) offered resistance, but their efforts proved insufficient as Maharashtra's bowlers kept a tight grip on proceedings. Akshaya led the charge with a four-wicket haul, while Isha Pathare claimed three wickets. Kushi also chipped in with two scalps as Maharashtra sealed a comprehensive victory.

Brief scores: Maharashtra: 286/8 in 50 overs (Ishwari Savkar 61, Ishwari Awasare 36, Bhavika Ahire 109, Akshaya Jadhav 26; BG Tejashwini 2-57, Vandita Rao 3-61) bt **Karnataka: 211 all out in 42.3 overs** (Rachitha Hatwar 63, Niki Prasad 58; IM Pathare 3-43, KN Mulla 2-22, Akshaya Jadhav 4-39).

Red-hot Pyrite best

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: S Waheed-trained Pyrite is expected to win the Golcond St Leger, the main event of the races to be held here on Monday. First race starts at 3pm.

SELECTIONS:

1. Osman Sagar Plate (Div II) 1100M: Aquatone 1, Shooting Star 2 **2. Yadadri Plate 1100M:** Yali 1, Vinfast 2 **3. Osman Sagar Plate (Div I) 1100M:** Roxxane 1, Clarity 2 **4. Sea Bird Plate 1100M:** Sharanga 1, Dubai Touch 2 **5. Golconda St Leger 2800M:** Pyrite 1, Dyf 2 **6. Dream Girl Plate 1400M:** Knight Regent 2, Sangreal 2 **7. Pocharam Plate 1600M:** Genie 1, NRI Star 2 **Day's best:** Knight Regent

ULTIMO TRIUMPHS

PS Chouhan-trained Ultimo, ridden by Trevor Patel, won The Seth Ramnath Daga Trophy, the feature event of the Mumbai races on Sunday.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

INCLUDES 4 PAGES OF BANGALORE TIMES AND *4 PAGES OF EDUCATION TIMES (*CITY AREAS ONLY)

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

Barcelona edge Rayo Vallecano 1-0 to increase lead of Spanish league and add more pressure on Real Madrid before its key derby against Atletico Madrid

भारत की जनगणना 2027 CENSUS OF INDIA

गृह मंत्रालय भारत सरकार सत्यमेव जयते

OUR CENSUS

OUR DEVELOPMENT

India's biggest public participation exercise, Census 2027, is about to start

This is not just a count... it is the foundation of Viksit Bharat @2047

First phase of Census

- Houselisting and Housing Census
- April to September, 2026 in a 30-day period as chosen by the State/UT
- Information about each house will be recorded
- The amenities, assets and basic information of house will be collected

How to do Self-Enumeration?

Self-Enumeration

Visit the online portal (se.census.gov.in) and obtain SE ID

Share your SE ID with the enumerator when enumerator visits your home

What is the benefit of Census?

- Accurate basis for future policies
- Fair distribution of resources
- Right plans at right place
- Better schools, hospitals and roads
- Proper development of every class and every region

The second phase of the Census will be conducted in February, 2027

Let's fulfill our responsibility and participate in the Census

Your information is completely secure

- Your information is kept confidential as per the Census Act, 1948
- Names and identities are not disclosed
- Data not used for any tax or for any investigation purpose

Your co-operation is needed

- When the enumerator comes, give correct and complete information
- Your correct information determines growth for many years to come

CensusIndia2027

CBC 19108/13/0008/2526

BARRY KEOGHAN ON HIDING AWAY FROM WORLD: 'THERE'S A LOT OF ABUSE ONLINE ABOUT MY LOOKS, IT'S MADE ME SHY AWAY'

TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026

THE BEST WAY TO APPRECIATE YOUR JOB IS TO IMAGINE YOURSELF WITHOUT ONE
— OSCAR WILDE

AMANDA PEET OPENS UP ABOUT HER CANCER DIAGNOSIS: 'CAME UP AT A TIME WHEN PARENTS WERE IN HOSPITAL, LOST BOTH OF THEM'

Netanyahu claims Israel and US fighting for entire world

Points To Attacks On Diego Garcia, Israeli Cities, Blocking Of Int'l Maritime Route

Reuters

Smoke rises after an Israeli strike on a bridge near Qasmiyeh, Lebanon, on Sunday. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun slammed the strikes on infrastructure, calling such attacks a 'prelude to a ground invasion'

Reuters

A drone view shows a damage in a residential neighbourhood in Dimona, Israel. Southern Israeli towns woke to widespread damage on Sunday after air defences failed to intercept two Iranian missiles overnight that injured scores of civilians in one of the worst attacks of the war so far on Israel

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday said the recent missile attacks on Diego Garcia shows that Iran has the capacity to reach deep into Europe and poses danger to the entire world. Netanyahu was visiting the southern Israeli city of Arad which faced Iranian missile strikes Saturday when he also said his country and the US are fighting together on behalf of everyone.

"If you want proof that Iran endangers the entire world, the last 48 hours have given it. In the last 48 hours, Iran targeted a civilian area. They're using that as a mass murder weapon. Luckily, no one was killed, but that's due to luck, not their intention. Their intention is to murder civilians," he said. Pointing out that Iran fired an intercontinental ballistic missile on Diego Garcia, Netanyahu said, "That's 4,000km. I've been warning all the time. They now have the capacity to reach deep into Europe. They already have fired on European countries — Cyprus. They are putting everyone in their sights."

For the past two decades, Israel has been referring to the Iranian ballistic missile programme, arguing that such weapons with nuclear capabilities would pose a grave threat not only to itself but also to Europe.

Iran fired missiles at the UK-US air base on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean on Saturday.

Netanyahu also drew attention to the Iran's attack on Jerusalem right next to the holy sites of the three monotheistic faiths, the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Al Aqsa Mosque and said, "By dint of a miracle, again, no one was hurt. "The three sites were nevertheless the targets," he said. A fragment from a ballistic missile fired by Iran fell quite close to the Al Aqsa mosque and the Western Wall on Friday. It was a second such attack during the recent escalation when Jerusalem, home to the three holy sites of the three faiths, was impacted.

Netanyahu also said Iran is stopping the maritime international route, energy route and "trying to blackmail the entire world." "What more proof do you need that this regime that threatens the entire world has to be stopped? Israel and the US are working together for the entire world," he claimed.

Calling upon the international community to come together in the fight against Iran, the he said he is happy to see some of them beginning to move in that direction, but claimed that more is needed. "(US) President Trump's call to have the international community confront this terrorist, fanatic regime of zealots, that is a call not only for the security of America and the security of Israel, it's for the security of the entire world. And it's time for them to act," he asserted. Responding to questions from reporters, Netanyahu said that Israel is responding to these attacks "with great force" but not targeting Iranian civilians.

Israel orders destruction of homes near Lebanon border

Israel struck a main bridge linking Lebanon's south to the rest of the country on Sunday after ordering its military to destroy all crossings over Lebanon's Litani River and to step up the demolition of homes near the southern border. The destruction of bridges and homes marks a significant escalation in Israel's military campaign in Lebanon. International law generally prohibits militaries from attacking civilian infrastructure, and the UN human rights chief has criticised Israel's actions in Lebanon, particularly its use of widespread evacuation orders. AGENCIES

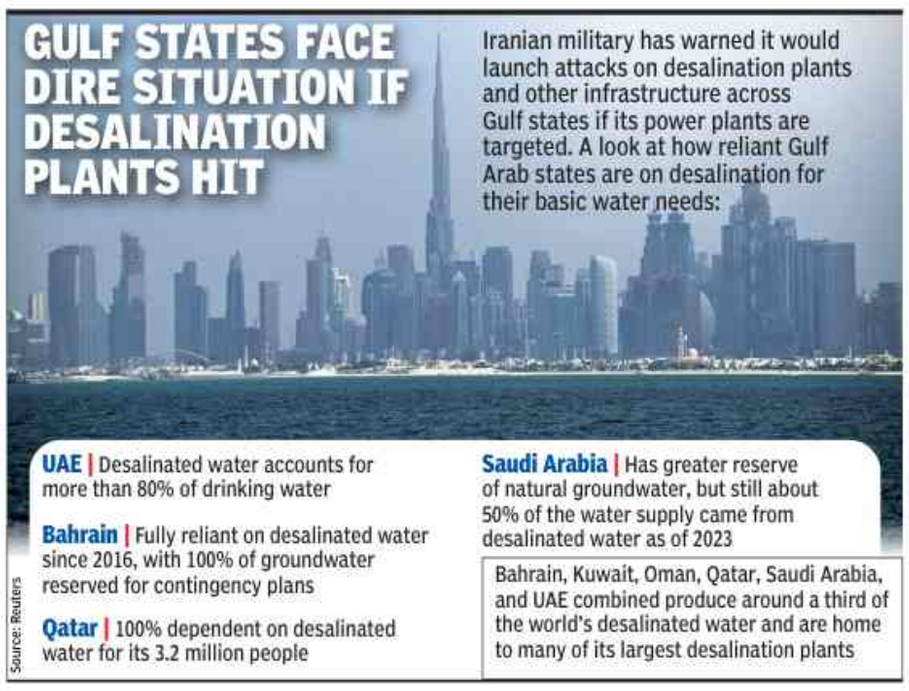
We are midway through war: Israel

▶Continued from P 1

On Friday, he said the US did not want a ceasefire with Iran, but later wrote on social media that the US was considering "winding down" its operations.

Israeli officials have told the public to expect a protracted campaign. On Saturday, Lt. Gen Eyal Zamir, the military chief of staff, told Israelis that they were "midway through" the war with Iran and that they would still be fighting during the Passover holiday next week.

To Trump's threats, Qalibaf responded on X that if Iran's power plants are targeted, then vital infrastructure across the region, including energy and desalination facilities, would be legitimate targets. NYT & AGENCIES



Sri Lanka raises fuel prices by 25% as war bites

Sri Lanka raised fuel prices by 25% on Sunday, the second increase in two weeks, as the country prepared for more impact from the war.

Regular petrol was increased to Sri Lankan Rupees (LKR) 398 ($1.3) per litre, up from LKR 317, while diesel, the fuel commonly used for public transport, rose by LKR 79 to LKR 382. Last week, govt ordered an 8% increase in retail fuel prices and introduced rationing to limit consumption.

"We hope to achieve a 15% to 20% reduction in fuel consumption with the latest increase," an official at the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation said. He said President Anura Kumara Dissanayake told them last week that the country must prepare for a prolonged conflict in West Asia. AFP

Japan may deploy minesweeper post ceasefire in Hormuz

Tokyo: Japan could consider deploying its military for minesweeping in the Strait of Hormuz, if a ceasefire is reached in the war on Iran, foreign minister Toshimitsu Motegi said on Sunday.

"This is purely hypothetical, but if a ceasefire were established and naval mines were creating an obstacle, then I think that would be something to consider," Motegi said during a Fuji TV programme.

Japan's military actions are limited under its postwar pacifist constitution, but its 2015 security legislation allows Japan to use its 'self-defence forces' overseas if an attack threatens Japan's survival and no other means are available to address the same. REUTERS

UK's nuclear-powered submarine positioned in Arabian Sea: Report

AFP/File

HMS Anson, armed with Tomahawk Block IV missiles and Spearfish torpedoes, left Perth, Australia, earlier this month and travelled roughly 5,500 miles (8,850km) to the region, says the report

A British nuclear-powered submarine equipped with Tomahawk cruise missiles has taken position in the Arabian Sea, giving Britain the capability to launch long-range strikes if regional conflict escalates, the Daily Mail reported on Saturday.

Reuters could not immediately verify the report. The British ministry of defence did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

HMS Anson, armed with Tomahawk Block IV missiles and Spearfish torpedoes, left Perth earlier this month and travelled roughly 5,500 miles to the region, the Daily Mail said.

The submarine surfaces periodically to communicate with the UK's Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood, where any launch order would be authorised by the prime minister and conveyed by the chief of joint operations, the report added. The deployment comes after Downing Street authorised the US to use British bases for strikes on Iranian sites threatening the Strait of Hormuz. REUTERS

No evidence Iran targeting Europe with missiles: UK

London: British cabinet minister Steve Reed said on Sunday that there was no assessment that backed claims Iran is planning to strike Europe with ballistic missiles.

On Saturday, the Israel Defence Forces posted on social media that Iran has missiles "that can reach London, Paris or Berlin". British housing secretary Reed told the BBC, "I'm not aware of any assessment at all that they are even trying to target Europe, let alone that they could if they tried."

In a separate interview with Sky News, Reed said that US President Trump spoke for himself when he threatened to "obliterate" Iran's power plants. Asked to define Britain's position, Reed said: "We're not going to be dragged into the war, but we will protect our own interests in the region. We will work with our allies to de-escalate the situation." REUTERS

US may escalate to de-escalate against Iran, says treasury chief

The US may need to "escalate" its attacks against Iran to be able to wind down the war, treasury secretary **Scott Bessent** said Sunday. President Trump on Saturday threatened to "obliterate" Iranian energy plants if Tehran did not open the pivotal Strait of Hormuz, just a day after saying US objectives were "very close" and that he was considering "winding down" the war.

Asked on NBC's "Meet the Press" if Trump was winding down or escalating the war, Bessent said: "They're not mutually exclusive. Sometimes you have to escalate to de-escalate." "This is the only language the Iranians understand," Bessent argued.

Bessent, as part of efforts to abate market turmoil, has temporarily lifted US sanctions on Iranian and Russian oil that had already been loaded onto ships. But the move has produced some backlash, with critics saying it will provide funding to Iran.

Asked about the contradiction, Bessent defended the move as helping alleviate pressure on US partners and lower the price Iran can receive for its oil. "That Iranian oil was always going to be sold to the Chinese. It was going to be sold at a discount... So which is better? If oil prices spiked to $150 and they (Iran) were getting 70% of that, or oil prices below 100?" The spike in crude prices has also seen costs at the pump across the US quickly rise, creating potential political risks for the president just months before the midterm polls. AFP

Patriot missile involved in March 9 Bahrain blast that injured 32 civilians likely US-operated, finds analysis

A US -operated Patriot air defence battery likely fired the interceptor missile involved in an explosion that injured dozens of civilians and tore through homes in US-ally Bahrain 10 days into the war on Iran, according to an analysis by academic researchers examined by Reuters.

Both Bahrain and Washington have blamed an Iranian drone attack for the March 9 blast, which the Gulf kingdom said injured 32 people including children.

Research associates Sam Lair and Michael Duitsman and Professor Jeffrey Lewis of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey concluded with moderate-to-high confidence that the suspect missile was likely launched from a US Patriot battery located about 7kms to the southwest of the Mahazza neighbourhood. Reuters showed the Middlebury analysis to two target-analysis experts and one Patriot system missile researcher, who found no reason to dispute its conclusion.

AFP/File

Two patriot missile batteries

One of them, Wes Bryant, a former senior targeting adviser and policy analyst at the Pentagon, said the conclusions were "pretty undeniable."

Bahrain acknowledged on Saturday that a Patriot missile was involved in the explosion. In a statement, a Bahrain govt spokesperson said the missile successfully intercepted an Iranian drone mid-air, saving lives. Neither Bahrain or the US has provided evidence that an Iranian drone was involved.

The use of costly, advanced weaponry to defend against attacks by far cheaper drones has been a defining feature of the war. The incident points to the risks of this strategy: The blast from the powerful Patriot contributed to widespread damage, while Bahrain's air defence was unable to prevent strikes that night on the nearby oil refinery. Both Bahrain and the US operate US Patriot air defence batteries in the kingdom.

Bahrain declined to say whether the missile was fired by its own forces or by the US. But key to the analysis was a video shot from an apartment and shared on social media. The video shows the suspect Patriot roaring across the sky on a northeastern trajectory. Hany Farid, a professor at the University of California specialising in digital forensics, reviewed the video to determine if it was AI-generated. He found "no obvious evidence that the video is fake."

Lair, Duitsman and Lewis geolocated the video to a neighbourhood in Riffa, Bahrain's second-largest city. "The Riffa site's location and orientation are consistent with the trajectory" of that of the suspect Patriot, the analysis said. REUTERS

Trump orders ICE agents to airports amid budget fight

Washington: Immigration agents will be deployed in US airports beginning Monday, aiming to alleviate soaring congestion at security screenings amid a weeks-long budget standoff over President Donald Trump's mass deportation drive, officials said. Trump announced the move Sunday morning, sending officials racing to quickly develop a plan.

Tom Homan, the president's border aide, confirmed that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents would be shifted from their normal duties to airports on Monday, but they would not be doing jobs they were untrained for. "I don't see an ICE agent looking at an x-ray machine, because you're not trained in that," he said on CNN's "State of the Union."

Rather, the agents would help "wherever we can provide extra security," such as monitoring exits. Funding has been lapsed since Feb 14 for the department of homeland security (DHS), as Democratic lawmakers demand reforms in the wake of Trump's immigration crackdown. DHS also oversees the transportation security administration, the agency responsible for airport security screenings, meaning staff around the country have worked for weeks without pay. Many TSA agents have begun calling out from work. Over 300 TSA employees have quit since the shutdown began, according to the DHS. AGENCIES

US house pushes to officially recognise '71 B'desh genocide

Ahsan Tasnim

Dhaka: In a significant move, a resolution has been introduced in the US House of Representatives seeking America officially recognise the 1971 Bangladesh genocide perpetrated by Pakistan and its allies, including Bangladesh's now-opposition party Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI).

The resolution called upon the US President to recognise the atrocities committed against Bengali Hindus by "Pakistani armed forces during 1971 and its allies in the Jamaat-e-Islami as crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide".

"The House of Representatives condemns the atrocities committed by the armed forces of Pakistan against the people of Bangladesh on March 25, 1971; recognises that while the Pakistani army and its Islamist allies indiscriminately mass-murdered ethnic Bengalis regardless of their religion and gender, killed their political leaders, intellectuals, professionals, and students, and forced tens of thousands of women to serve as their sex slaves," states the resolution.

Submitted on March 20 by Democratic Congressman **Greg Landsman** and referred to the foreign affairs committee — it states that they "specifically targeted the minority Hindus for extermination through mass slaughtering, gang rape, conversion, and expulsion".

Cuba begins to restore power after third outage in a month

Havana: Cuba began restoring its energy system on Sunday, a day after a nationwide collapse of the entire grid left millions of people in the dark for the third time this month. Some 72,000 customers in the capital, among them five hospitals, had electricity again early Sunday, according to a report from the state-run Electric Union and the ministry of energy and mines, but it's only a fraction of Havana's total population of approximately 2 million.

Cuba is facing an unprecedented energy crisis. Its ageing grid has drastically eroded in recent years, but govt has also blamed the outages on a US energy blockade, after President Donald Trump in Jan warned of tariffs on any country that provides oil to Cuba.

Daily blackouts have a significant impact on the population, whose lives are disrupted by reduced work hours, lack of electricity for cooking and damage to household appliances, among other consequences. AP

Havana says military ready as Trump threats multiply

Cuba's deputy foreign minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio said Sunday that the country was preparing for a possible military assault as President Trump increases economic pressure on Havana.. "In fact it is preparing for the possibility of military aggression. We would be naive if, looking at what's happening around the world, we would not do that. But we hope that it doesn't occur." BLOOMBERG

WORLD DIGEST

Reuters

IN FULL BLOOM: Visitors view cherry blossom at Kew Gardens in London

Strike on a hosp in Sudan killed at least 64 last week, says WHO

At least 64 people were killed, including at least 13 children, in a strike on a hospital in Sudan's western Darfur region last week, the WHO said on Saturday. The strike on the Al Daein Teaching Hospital in East Darfur on Friday also injured at least 89 people and rendered the hospital non-functional, Tedros Ghebreyesus, the head of the WHO, said on X. Sudan slid into chaos in April 2023 when a power struggle between the military and the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces exploded into war throughout the country. The RSF has blamed the military for the strike on the hospital. The army has denied the attack, but two military officials said the strike was targeting a nearby police station. They spoke on the condition of anonymity as they were not allowed to discuss the matter openly.

Syrian authorities' new limits on alcohol sales in Damascus spark backlash

Crowds of Syrians rallied Sunday to protest authorities' efforts to limit the sale and consumption of alcohol in Damascus, reflecting rising anxiety in the cosmopolitan capital that Syria's new Islamist govt may threaten long-held secular freedoms. "This is not about whether we want to drink alcohol, this is about personal freedom," said Isa Qazah, a sculptor who joined the protest. "We have come here to defend an idea."

Trump to feature on coin

President Trump is all set to feature on a gold coin to commemorate the US' 250th anniversary. The 24-karat gold coin will be only the second time a living president has featured on a coin. Earlier, Calvin Coolidge, the 30th President had featured on a commemorative coin that were minted to mark 150 years of the US Independence. US law states that no living president can appear on US currency.

Digital transition: Why the 99-year-old CBS News Radio is signing off

Michael M Grynbaum & Benjamin Mullin

It transported Americans onto the rooftops of London in the Blitz and into the bleak embers of concentration camps in liberated Nazi Germany, an aural atlas to world events thousands of miles away. In more recent years, it transmitted eyewitness dispatches from world capitals to hundreds of local stations in rural and sparsely populated parts of the country.

CBS News Radio was a pioneer and stalwart of the mass media century, the proving ground of star journalists like Edward R Murrow, with a distinctive five-tone chime that became synonymous with breaking news long before the rise of 24-hour cable and the internet.

Now, its venerable airwaves are crackling to a close. Paramount Skydance, the parent company of CBS, announced Friday that the radio news network would sign off, after 99 years, near the end of May.

The inexorable rise of podcasts, and the expansion into audio journalism by news outlets such as New York Times, has chipped away at traditional radio's presence in public life.

CBS Radio Theatre in NYC in 1939

CBS News Radio had been whittled down to a handful of correspondents in recent years and is unprofitable, a person familiar with the company said. Still, a Nielsen study found that radio today reaches 93% of American adults. And CBS said its radio network was providing reporting and short news segments to about 700 subscriber affiliates around the country. Stations that wish to continue carrying news reporting will need to look elsewhere.

In a staff memo Friday, Bari Weiss, editor-in-chief of CBS News, and Tom Cibrowski, president, observed that the radio network had "served as the foundation for everything we have built since 1927." But because of "a shift in radio station programming strategies" and "challenging economic realities," the company concluded that it was "impossible to continue the service."

When it made its Jazz Age debut in Sept 1927, CBS' radio news report joined a crowded market of broadcasters seeking dominance over a powerful new communications medium. Millions tuned in to programs that eventually carried President Franklin D Roosevelt's famous "fireside chats" to the nation.

It was Murrow — "the right man in the right place in the right era," as David Halberstam described him — and his CBS dispatches from Europe in the 1930s and 1940s that transformed the network into a leader in broadcast news. Murrow's accounting of Adolf Hitler's rise, and then the first bombs hitting London in the Blitz, riveted Americans at a time when technology was making the world smaller and more connected.

Weiss has said she is seeking to modernise a news division that has yet to adapt to the habits of modern viewers. Like other leaders, she is also facing budget pressures. Since CBS was bought last year by David Ellison the news division has seen two rounds of layoffs. NYT

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THE TIMES

INCLUSIVE OF BANGALORE TIMES AND EDUCATION TIMES (CITY AREAS ONLY) |

WANGCHUK URGES UNION GOVT TO ENSURE THAT TALKS WITH LADAKHI LEADERS ARE BASED ON A 'WIN-WIN' APPROACH FOR BOTH LADAKH & CENTRE 8

DANCE OF DEMOCRACY

- Denied ticket by Cong ally Raijor Dal, **Sherman Ali Ahmed appears in TMC Assam list even before quitting party**
- **Morally couldn't vote for Congress-backed candidate**, say 6 BJD rebel MLAs suspended for cross-voting in RS poll
- **8.6% of West Bengal voters to know today whether they are eligible to vote** as EC is set to publish first supplementary voters' list P 11

Parivarvaad wins, Cong fields kin of late MLAs

Samarth To Contest From Davanagere S, Umesh Bagalkot

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Amid speculation of multiple aspirants in the fray and family rift over candidature, Congress Sunday announced Samarth Mallikarjun and Umesh Meti as party's candidates for the April 9 by-elections to Davanagere South and Bagalkot, respectively.

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president D K Shivakumar said the party has followed the tradition of giving tickets to the family members of the late legislators. He expressed confidence of retaining both seats.

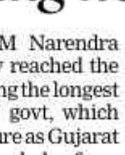
While Davanagere South seat was held by Shamanur Shivashankarappa, Bagalkot was represented by H Y Meti, both from Congress.

Following days of "negotiations" with the Muslim community seeking a ticket from Davanagere, which has a 40% voting population in the segment, it was decided to continue with the Congress template of giving ticket to the family member of the legislator who passed away and necessitated the bypoll.

Since Congress had decided to pick Meti's son for Bagalkot, the party had to look within Shamanur family and select grandson Samarth for bypoll candidature.

▶'Thrust responsibility', P 5

WILL NDA CHALLENGE CONG HOLD?

DAVANAGERE SOUTH		BAGALKOT	
Cong | Samarth Mallikarjun	NDA | Srinivas T Dasakariyappa	Cong | Umesh Meti	NDA | V Charantimath
			
(Incumbent Shamanur Shivashankarappa died on Dec 14)		(HY Meti died on Nov 4)	

Went with popular opinion on candidates: DKS

Davanagere dilemma: On Muslims seeking ticket, D K Shivakumar said he saw nothing wrong. On a possible tradeoff, DKS said Abdul Jabbar was an incumbent MLC in his third term

Bagalkot conundrum: All 4 children of Meti wanted ticket. Though the eldest son was front-runner, local leaders rooted for Umesh

Stray dogs maul 15 deer at Ch'garh park

Fifteen deer died after stray dogs bit them at their Sanjay Park rescue centre enclosure in Chhattisgarh's Ambikapur district Friday night, prompting the state forest department to suspend four employees, order a probe and issue a notice to the local forest ranger. P8

Guidance value benchmark for property loans, says HC

Vasantha.Kumar
@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Karnataka high court has said guidance value fixed by sub-registrars for residential and commercial purposes should be treated as primary benchmark for determining the value of property, even for loans.

Justice Suraj Govindaraj made the observation, while allowing a petition filed by Parwati from Vijayapura district. The petitioner had sought loan from Karnataka State Financial Corporation (KSFC) by mortgaging 10 acres of land. According to her, the guidance value of the property was Rs 4.7cr at the rate of Rs 900 per square metre for residential purposes and Rs 1,200 per square metre for commercial purposes.

▶'Not confined to...', P 5

HC approval for limited works at Roerich estate

High court has allowed limited works in non-forested areas of Roerich & Devika Rani Estate on the southern outskirts of Bengaluru. This has come as a setback to activists opposing the eco-tourism project. P5

Modi is India's longest serving head of govt

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi on Sunday reached the milestone of being the longest serving head of govt, which includes his tenure as Gujarat CM, drawing accolades from the governing NDA, with home minister Amit Shah describing it as a rare legacy built on unprecedented trust and unparalleled service.

Till now, the feat was held by former Sikkim CM Pawan Kumar Chamling who kept the seat for 8,930 days between Dec 1994 and May 2019. Officials noted that Modi has ticked the landmark in his 25th year as head of govt, an uninterrupted journey he began as Gujarat CM in Oct 2001, before taking over as PM in May 2014. TNN

PIPS CHAMLING

Narendra Modi	
As Gujarat CM	4,610 days
As PM (continuing)	4,321 days
Pawan Kumar Chamling, As Sikkim CM	8,930 days

▶ 'Without day's leave', P 10

CCS recognises 'significant impact' of West Asia conflict

Discusses Diversifying Sources Of Import Of Various Industrial Sectors

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Recognising the "significant impact" of the conflict in West Asia on the global economy and its effect on India, the cabinet committee on security led by PM Narendra Modi on Sunday discussed steps to diversify the sources of import of chemicals, pharma, petrochemicals and other industrial sectors, while drawing comfort from the stock of fertiliser and coal.

"We had extensive discussions on short-, medium- and long-term measures, including ensuring continued availability of fertilisers for farmers, diversifying import sources for key sectors, promoting exports to new destinations and more. We are committed to safeguarding our citizens from the impact of the conflict," the PM posted on X after the meeting of the panel comprising the home, defence, finance and external affairs ministers.

The assessment was that there may not be a significant domestic impact in the immediate term, but there was a need to prepare for the medium and long term. Currently, the challenge before policymakers is that there is no clarity on when and how the conflict will end.

The effect on India was assessed and counter-measures, both immediate and long-term, were discussed, an official statement said

"The ongoing conflict in West Asia will have significant short-, medium-and long-term impact on the global economy and its effect on India were assessed and counter-measures, both immediate and long-term, were discussed," an official statement said.

Sunday's meeting was also attended by other ministers, including of agriculture, health, chemicals, power, shipping, civil aviation, commerce & industry, I&B, food & civil supplies and railways.

While Modi has been holding talks with his counterparts from other countries, particularly those in the Gulf region — home to a large Indian diaspora and the source of a large chunk of energy imports — this was the first meeting at the level of CCS to work out a strategy with an assessment that the impact of the conflict is going to last for some time.

The PM has suggested a dedicated group of ministers and a panel of secretaries to deal with the issue, with detailed stakeholder consultations lined up through sectoral groups. He has also asked the Centre to coordinate with states to check black-marketing and hoarding.

"PM said that the conflict is an evolving situation and the entire world is affected in some form. In such a situation, all efforts must be made to safeguard citizens from the impact of this conflict. PM instructed that all arms of govt work together to ensure least inconvenience to citizens," an official statement said.

It added that several measures proposed by different ministries would be prepared and implemented in the coming days.

At the meeting, cabinet secretary TV Somanathan made a presentation on the global situation, and the mitigation measures taken so far and those being planned by different departments. "The expected impact and measures taken to address it across sectors like agriculture, fertilisers, food security, petroleum, power, MSMEs, exporters, shipping, trade, finance, supply chains and all affected sectors were discussed. The overall macro-economic scenario in the country and further measures to be taken were also discussed," the statement said.

EAM & Lavrov to address meet on trade amid war in West Asia

Moscow: External affairs minister **S Jaishankar** and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, will on Monday virtually address a conference that will see experts from the two sides deliberate on navigating the choppy waters amid tension in the Gulf region.

The one-day conference organised by the embassy of India in Moscow and Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) is especially significant considering the impact of the conflict in the Gulf region on the International North-South Transport Corridor.

Iran's Bandar Anzali, which faced damage due to a missile strike by US-Israel on March 18, is a major port on the corridor that is a crucial link between Mumbai and St Petersburg, bypassing the Suez Canal, to boost trade between Asia and Europe.

Both India and Russia have pinned their hopes on the corridor for boosting bilateral trade to $100 billion by 2030, as was agreed to by PM Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin at their New Delhi summit in Dec.

The conference 'Russia and India: Towards a New Agenda for Bilateral Relations' is a second attempt to chart the roadmap to enhance political, economic and cultural cooperation between the two strategic partners.

According to the schedule published by RIAC, the conference will be organised around three thematic blocks: political, economic, and cultural-humanitarian, with govt and public figures, representatives of the business and scientific communities in attendance.

Jaishankar and Lavrov will virtually address the conference at which two former ambassadors of India to Russia representing different thinktanks are expected to elaborate the Indian view on the rapidly changing situation in the world, RIAC said. PTI

If US strikes us, we should hit Delhi, Mumbai: Ex-Pak envoy

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In a hugely provocative statement, **Abdul Basit**, former high commissioner of Pakistan to India, has said that striking Indian cities like New Delhi and Mumbai should be Islamabad's "default move" if the country comes under attack from the US.

"America won't attack Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Even if we believe that in a hypothetical situation, America attacks Pakistan, we won't be able to hit back as America does not fall within our nuclear range. (Asking a TV anchor) What do you think will be our option then? India," Basit asserted at an interview with a local Pakistani channel. "If somebody casts an evil eye on us, we will attack Mumbai and New Delhi in India without even thinking twice. We will see whatever happens later," he told ABN News.

Basit further said, "Right now, neither America nor Israel is under our nuclear range. But the world should know this: that if we come under attack, we will, in turn, attack India wherever we want."

He made the remark while reacting to US National Intelligence director Tulsi Gabbard's recent statement before the Senate intelligence committee in which she had said that Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile programme could develop into a threat.

Some media reports also quoted Basit as saying Gabbard's "anti-Pakistan" worldview was well known. "Pakistan's deterrence is India-specific. Tulsi Gabbard saw our missiles, but not India's Agni-5 and Agni-6," he was reported to have said.

Presenting the 2026 Annual Threat Assessment, Gabbard had said that Pakistan was among countries "researching and developing an array of novel advanced or traditional missile delivery systems with nuclear and conventional payloads that put our homeland within range".

According to Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, Pakistan has six operational types of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles.

BJP national spokesperson Tuhin Sinha said on Sunday, "Abdul Basit's threat... shows that even today, Pakistan is rattled by strikes during Operation Sindoor. It has lost its mental balance."

Soon after Gabbard's statement, Tahir Andrabi, spokesman for Pakistan's ministry of foreign affairs, said, "Pakistan categorically rejects the recent assertion by a US official alleging a potential threat from Pakistan's missile capabilities."

Air India to deploy more pilots for Dreamliners on West route

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New Delhi: With airspace restrictions to the west of India increasing at a furious pace in the last 11 months, Air India is finally sending reinforcement pilots for its long haul backbone fleet of Boeing 787 Dreamliners that are deployed on ever-lengthening Europe and UK routes. The conversion of about 28 to 30 pilots of Boeing 777s to the Dreamliner is nearly complete and they will start on the B787s next month. Conversion training for another batch of about 15 narrow body pilots to the B787 will begin from March 23.

This was conveyed to the fatigued-by-now wide body pilots of AI last Saturday by the airline management. The airline is going to convert more narrow body pilots to the B787 and Airbus A350 as the more of the latter type are expected to join the fleet later this year. The B777s' numbers in AI fleet is falling as the legacy planes are being sent for retrofitting.

In the most recent instance, Pakistan airspace for Indian carriers was closed on April 23, 2025. Since then Indian carriers' flights to and from the west have been taking longer routes — going over Arabian Sea seeing clear of Karachi airspace and then heading to their destinations. These routes got even longer when Iran had to be avoided. The Israel-Iran war has further increased the no fly areas and this keeps increasing, pushing airlines more to the south of Saudi.

"We have been flying longer for almost a year now. The airline seeks and gets dispensation from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) from pilot flight duty time limitation (FDTL) rules, allowing it to now operate longer flights of upto 11.5 hours with just two pilots. We are completely fatigued now as the buildup has been happening for a year and instead of getting any relief, its keeps getting worse with more punishing FDTL dispensations. This is not good for flight safety," said numerous pilots.

Both the airline and the DGCA say they are aware of the issue but are forced to on FDTL issue for the sake of keeping connectivity intact. "We are seeking numbers from AI on how they are increasing pilot availability for B787s. They have to give us regular updates on actual numbers apart from just plans and projections," said officials.

Govt pushes for PNG connections, asks all ministries to assess demand

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Amid the LPG supply crunch, the Centre has asked all ministries to assess the potential demand of piped natural gas (PNG) across canteens and pantries at govt departments and offices, and push for its expansion.

It has also urged govt establishments, residential colonies and canteens to switch to PNG, while city gas distribution (CGD) companies are being extended support to expand their networks. The push for PNG is also aimed at reducing dependence on imported LPG in the long term.

Domestic LPG supplies continue to be ring-fenced, with commercial users bearing the brunt of pressures.

Petroleum and natural gas ministry said LPG supply remained a concern

The ministry of petroleum and natural gas said on Sunday that LPG supply remained a concern amid the evolving situation in West Asia. To offset disruptions, domestic refineries have maximised LPG output, while supplies are being sourced from alternative geographies such as the US, Russia and Japan.

The ministry said CGD entities have been advised to prioritise PNG connections for commercial establishments, such as restaurants, hotels and canteens.

"CGD entities have been directed by the petroleum and natural gas regulatory board to shorten the timeline between the submission of applications and the commencement of gas supply to households," the ministry said. The Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation has also instructed its offices to dispose of CGD applications within 10 days.

Gas distribution companies are offering incentives to encourage both domestic and commercial LPG consumers to switch to PNG, while states and UTs have been urged to expedite approvals required for CGD network expansion.

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